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DAVID HAJDU

BUSH'S NON-NEO NEOCON
LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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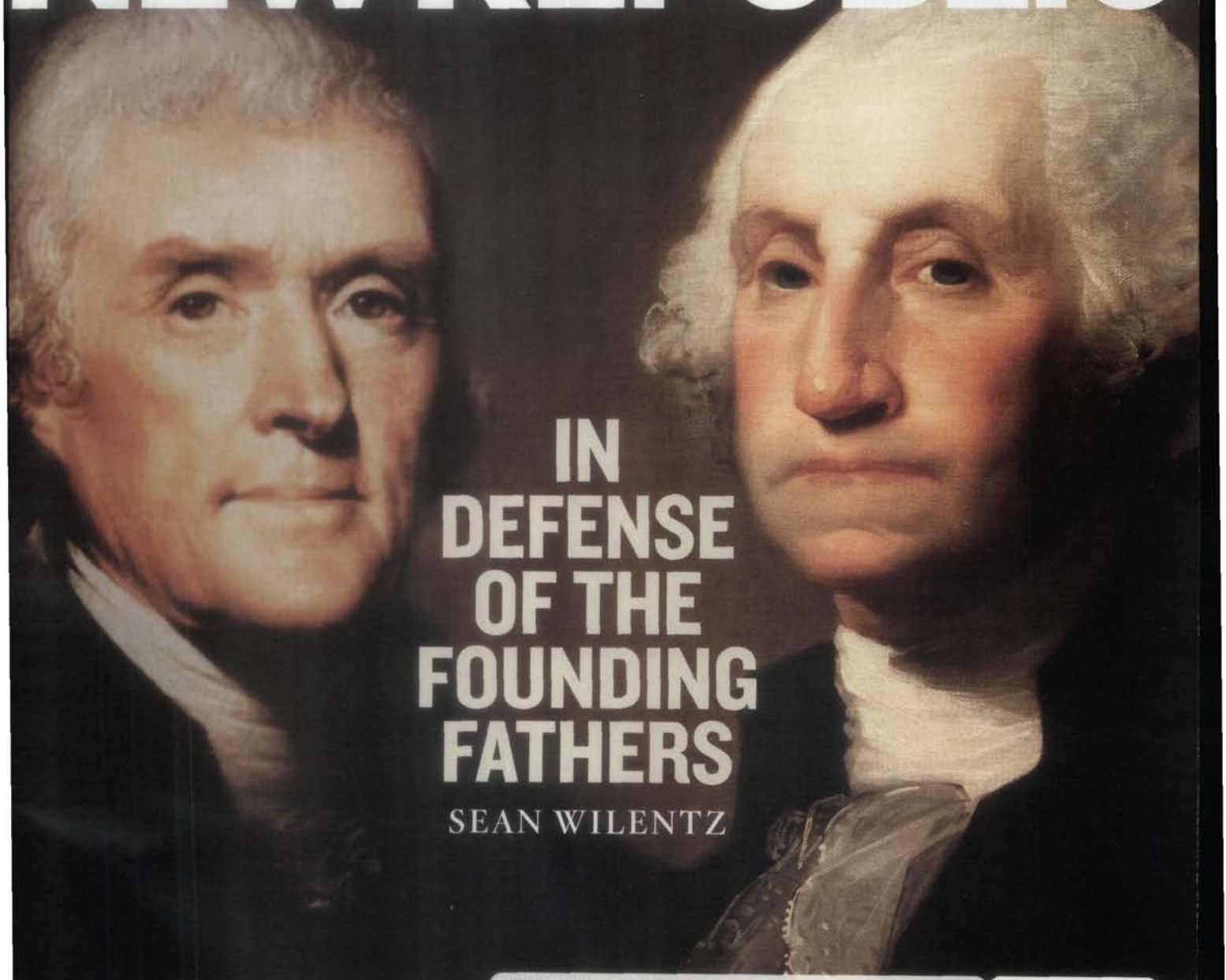

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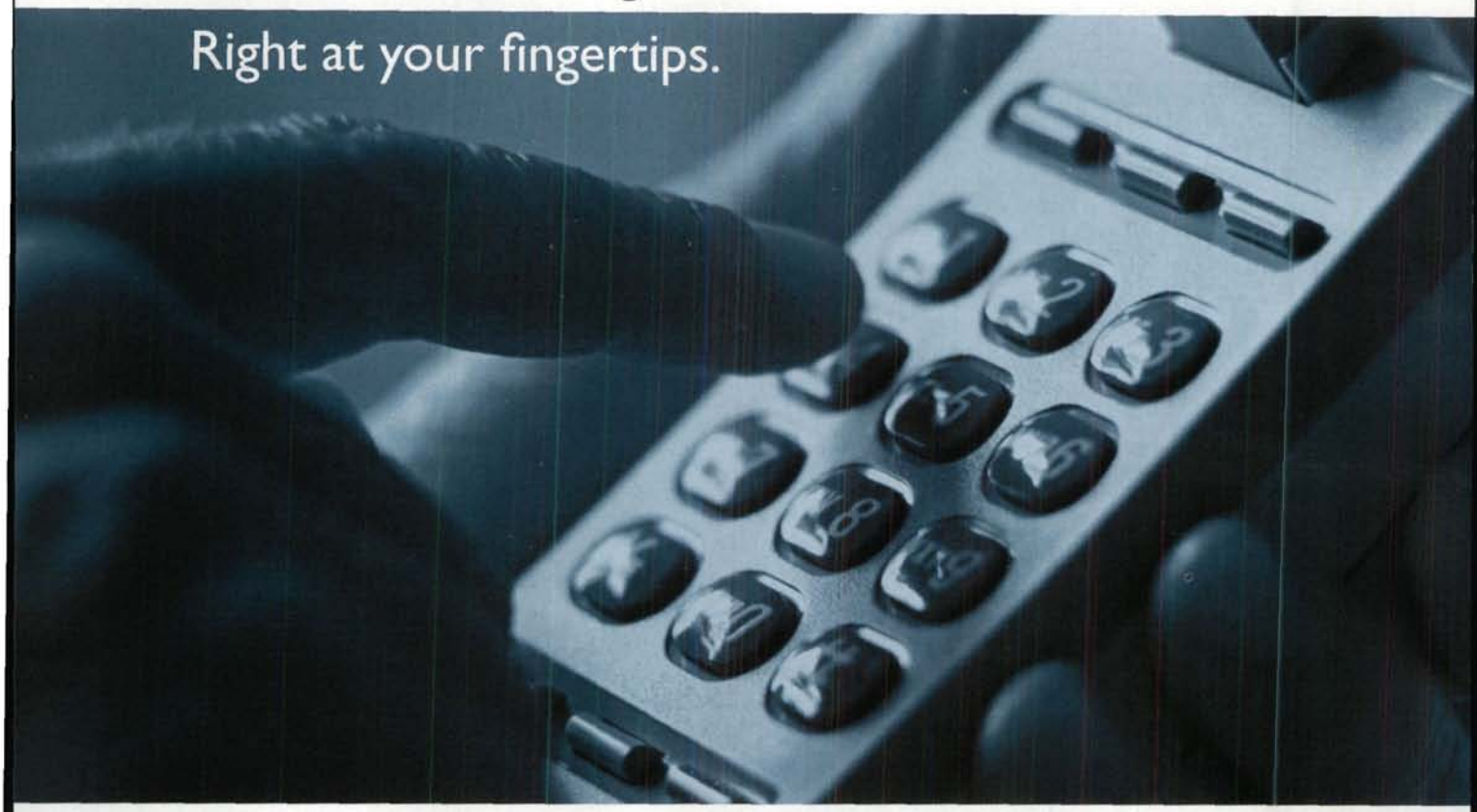

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CORRESPONDENCE

TOO BROAD A STROKE

THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH SOME disaffected Muslim youths of Northern African descent, most of whom are French citizens, since they were born here in the mid-'70s or later (Martin Peretz, "Revenged," February 23). The second intifada, cleverly manipulated by some preachers in the ghettos where we confine our underclass (not unlike Americans) by denying the less-educated among them economic opportunities, has helped to fuel a new and most revolting expression of anti-Semitism that is by no means representative of the nation as a whole.

As our census does not take race into account, it is very difficult to come to a clear estimate of the number of Northern African—descended French citizens—hence the wildly varying figures circulating. Cassandras love to quote the six million figure; most demographers believe it is vastly overinflated. Also, the French birthrate is second to Ireland in Europe and has consistently surprised pundits over the past five years.

Fostering economic growth and a peaceful solution in the Middle East and taking into account the rights of all parties seems to me a better use of one's time than repeating tired clichés that enhance nobody.

ANNE-SOPHIE ANDRÉ
Toulouse, France

BIRD CAGE

OLIVER BURKEMAN'S STATEMENT that Queen Elizabeth II "personally owns every swan in the nation" in his otherwise excellent piece on those seeking asylum in Britain is not quite right ("Swan Dive," February 23).

First, while the queen owns most swans, two of the ancient livery companies of the City of London, the Vintners' and Dyers' Companies, own the remainder under fifteenth-century charters. Every July, there is a ceremony ("Swan Upping") on the Thames in which the Royal Swan Keeper and the companies mark the newborn cygnets.

Second, the queen no more "personally" owns the swans than she does Her Majesty's ships of the Royal Navy or Her Majesty's Prisons of the Prison Service. Rather, she holds them in her

capacity as monarch. It would be proper to say the swans belong to the crown.

Trivial points, yes, but we must watch the pence and let the pounds take care of themselves.

MICHAEL O. ESHLEMAN
Turtlecreek Township, Ohio

OH THE HORROR!

IN FRANKLIN FOER'S PIECE "OOPS!," detailing interparty retribution facing Dean supporters, much is made of "loud, uncomfortable" arguments in the hallways of the Brookings Institution (February 23). Pray gentlemen, how did it come to this? My fellow provincials here in central Illinois are all aflutter. Can the great Brookings survive such monstrous strife?

BILL STEINBACHER-KEMP
Normal, Illinois

POOR MODEL

I AGREE WITH CLAY RISEN THAT RECENT responses to offshore outsourcing, such as the USA Jobs Protection Act, will probably not do much ("Missed Target," February 2). But I disagree that the jobs outsourced are "hardly the sorts of jobs on which the U.S. economy depends." The lower-level programming jobs he refers to are the first rung on the technical ladder that new I.T. engineering graduates climb. By cutting off that rung, we are making a master's degree mandatory to find work. As he says, worker training is the answer, but it is a tall order to bring all our I.T. workers up to that level. We need a much greater commitment to training and to getting our students to learn math than we have now. It is wishful thinking to assume outsourcing will not hurt our economy. The bill will come due in a few years, when we find we have not prepared enough engineers to tackle the tough design jobs. Why does it seem like the economists have overlooked this fact—just another "externality" that did not make it into their models?

GEOFF RYDER
San Jose, California

CLAY RISEN REPLIES:

The proper response to offshore outsourcing isn't simply more education but smarter education. In other words, it's not just a matter of making sure a higher percentage of our working population graduates from high school (though that's certainly part of it)—what we need is targeted, continuing education that can readily identify job-market demands and provide workers the necessary skills to exploit them. This is, as Geoff Ryder points out, a tall order. Obviously, unemployed workers can't easily afford more education; thus, any serious attempt at job retraining requires either increased government spending or mandates on businesses to contribute to the efforts. It means making job transitions easier, through unemployment insurance and portable health coverage. At the same time, it means close coordination between government and business to maximize workforce efficiency and minimize painful disruptions. Ironically, the administration is well-positioned to pursue many of these goals—but it is apparently unwilling to try. ■

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PUTTING ASSESSMENTS *to* WORK *in the* CLASSROOM

KURT M. LANDGRAF,
PRESIDENT & CEO, ETS

The public conversation about the quality of American education evolved and intensified over the past two decades, and now real reform is being achieved. Some may want to continue arguing about standards, accountability and testing, but the real battle is over. National public policy has been set. We will have standards. We will have accountability. And assessments are going to be an important element in the equation.

ETS is ready to join with teachers and school leaders in taking the next essential step, to put assessments to use where they matter most: in the classroom. We must make much better use of tests and test results so that we can determine who's learning, who's not, and how classroom practice and professional development can be adjusted to ensure that no student is, in fact, left behind.

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On Credit

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

JOHN KERRY NEEDS A NATIONAL security message that goes beyond "I served in Vietnam." And he needs a critique of President Bush's economic policy that resonates beyond the Democratic base. Here's a suggestion: The Bush tax cuts will undermine the war on terrorism. It's aggressive, it's hawkish, and it happens to be true.

My colleague Jonathan Chait has already shown how Bush's tax cuts have drained money from homeland security ("The 9/10 President," March 10, 2003). In November 2001, the ranking Democrat and Republican on the House Appropriations Committee tried to add $10 billion to the president's homeland security request for things like port inspections and FBI computer upgrades. Bush threatened a veto, and Congress backed down. Again, in the summer of 2002, Congress passed a $5.1 billion spending bill, half of which went toward homeland security. Bush declared, "We'll spend none of it," forcing the Customs Service to shelve plans to upgrade various facilities. In June 2003, Republicans defeated a Democratic effort to add $1 billion for security at airports and border crossings. "There's a new sheriff in town," boasted then–Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, "and he's dedicated to fiscal discipline."

Actually, he's dedicated to upper-income tax cuts. Under our fiscal-disciplinarian-in-chief, this year's budget deficit will hit a record $478 billion. Three-quarters of that deficit, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, stems from declining tax revenue. And, according to the Bush administration itself, about half of that drop in revenue results from Bush's tax cuts. In other words, the tax cuts have ballooned the deficit, and Bush has used the ballooning deficit as a justification for underfunding homeland security.

Kerry—with the help of a supportive firefighters' union—has made this point. But it's not enough. Homeland security is by its nature defensive; Bush's strength is that he seems on the offensive against terrorists. Kerry needs to show that, if Bush's tax cuts remain in place, the United States won't be able to remain on the offensive for long.

In the fall of 1999, presidential candidate Bush declared that America's "[military] resources are overstretched." But the war on terrorism has left them far more overstretched today. Between March 2000 and September 2003, the number of American troops deployed overseas grew by 61 percent; the number of reservist "duty days" has nearly tripled. As Lieutenant General John M. Riggs recently told the *Baltimore Sun*, "I have been in the Army 39 years, and I've never seen the Army as stretched in that 39 years as I have today."

To pay for these huge new commitments, the Bush administration has increased defense spending. But the metastasizing budget deficit is making those increases harder and harder to afford. In a startling move, the twelve Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee last week voted to trim the president's defense budget by $7 billion. The full Senate reversed the cuts, but the financial pressure will only build in the coming years. In 2008, the first baby-boomers become eligible for Social Security, heralding what Alan Greenspan recently called a "dramatic, demographic change" that "is certain to place enormous demands on our nation's resources." Just as Social Security and Medicare obligations skyrocket, the Bush tax cuts—if they are made permanent, as the president demands—will leave the federal government with far less money to meet them. The result, according to the Congressional Budget Office, could be deficits of roughly $2.75 trillion between 2005 and 2014.

"This feels to me the way it did back in 1985," John Hamre, president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, recently told *The Washington Post*. "I believe the tide has begun to turn. These deficit and defense budget numbers are so shockingly big now that, politically, they're untenable." But back then the cold war was starting to wind down, which in the '90s permitted a dramatic decline in military spending. The war on terrorism, by contrast, has just begun. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments recently estimated that fully funding the Future Years Defense Plan—the Pentagon's estimate of what it needs to defend the United States in the coming decade—will cost $885 billion *more* than what the administration has requested. Factor that in, and a decade from now you're looking at deficits of more than $3.6 trillion.

And even that isn't enough for many conservative pundits. Bush's new defense spending has mostly gone to pay for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; the administration hasn't permanently added any American troops. Last month, a *Weekly Standard* editorial warned that "the overall structure of the U.S. military remains dangerously small."

And how, exactly, does the *Standard* plan to pay for enlarging the military given America's coming fiscal train-wreck? We can't stop the baby-boomers from retiring, and any Social Security privatization plan—if it guarantees current retirees their promised benefits, as President Bush has—will worsen the entitlement crunch, not lessen it. The deficit is already politically unsustainable at $468 billion, let alone several trillion. And there's not nearly enough nonmilitary, non-homeland-security-related discretionary spending to make a difference, even if you cut it to the bone. In other words, there's simply no way to pay for the military the *Standard* wants without scrapping the Bush tax cuts. Too bad a *Standard* article this month declared that Republicans should "extend the president's tax cuts and perhaps try to make them permanent."

As long as conservatives cling to Bush's tax cuts, their demands for a military capable of winning the war on terrorism will ring hollow. Which gives John Kerry an opportunity. He has proposed 40,000 more active-duty troops. And, because he wants to repeal the upper-income parts of the Bush tax cut, he might just be able to pay for them. Kerry's potential message is simple: A nation in fiscal crisis can't win a global war. It may not be easy for the senator from Massachusetts to convince the public he has the stomach to defeat terrorism, but, unlike President Bush, at least he can say he'll have the means.

PETER BEINART

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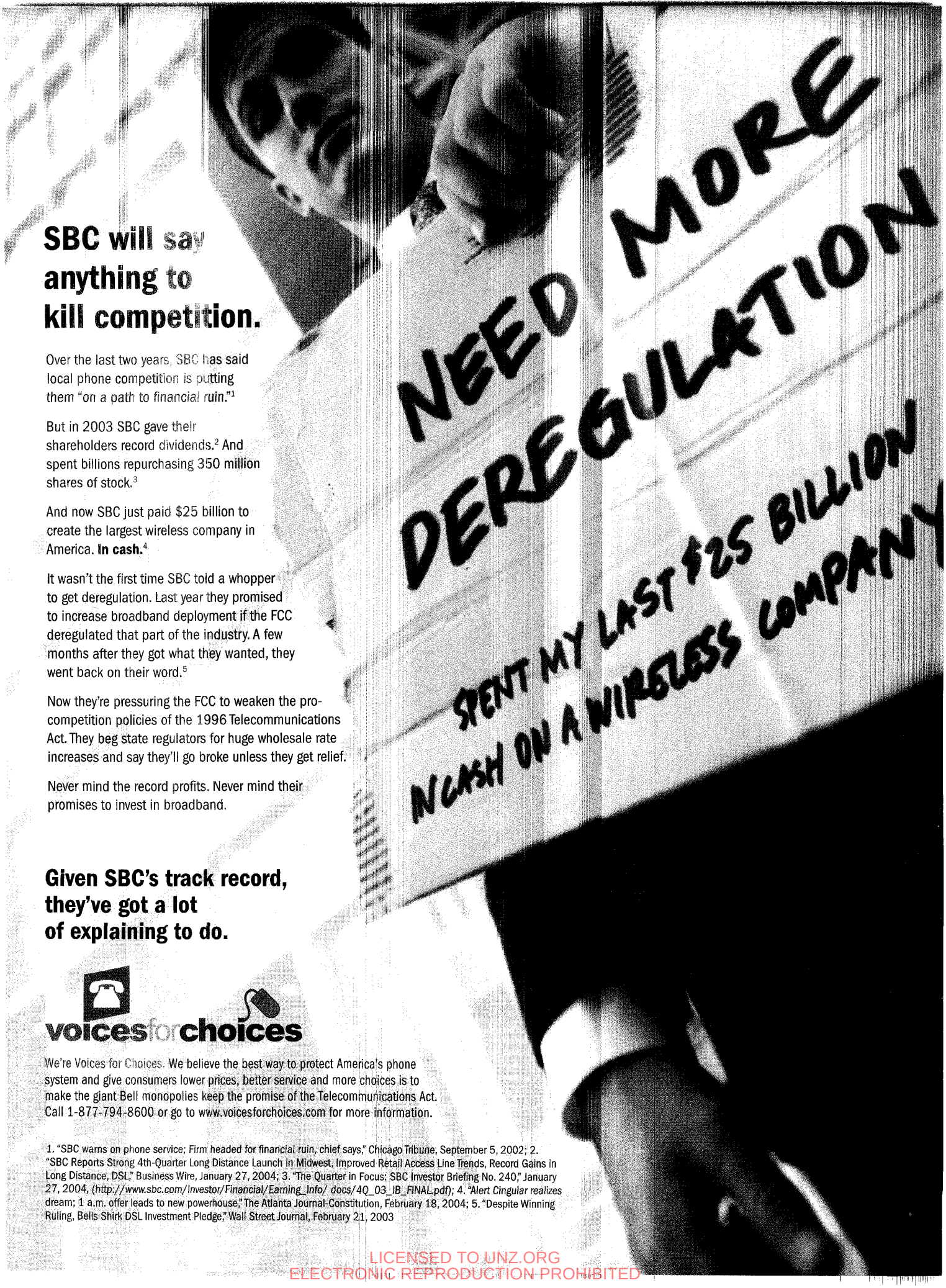

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1. "SBC warns on phone service; Firm headed for financial ruin, chief says," Chicago Tribune, September 5, 2002; 2. "SBC Reports Strong 4th-Quarter Long Distance Launch in Midwest, Improved Retail Access Line Trends, Record Gains in Long Distance, DSL," Business Wire, January 27, 2004; 3. "The Quarter in Focus: SBC Investor Briefing No. 240," January 27, 2004, (http://www.sbc.com/Investor/Financial/Earning_Info/ docs/4Q_03_IB_FINAL.pdf); 4. "Alert Cingular realizes dream; 1 a.m. offer leads to new powerhouse," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 18, 2004; 5. "Despite Winning Ruling, Bells Shirk DSL Investment Pledge," Wall Street Journal, February 21, 2003

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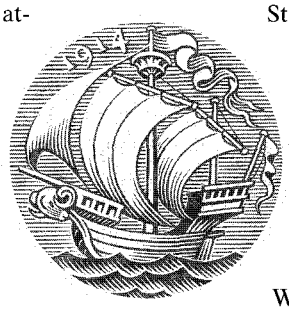
To Die In Madrid

TWO CATACLYSMS SHOOK Spain last week. The first was an atrocity, the second was the response to an atrocity. These were harsh and clarifying events. Not since the 1930s has the course of history been so darkly illumined from Madrid. The bombings at the Madrid train stations shattered, or should have shattered, the complacency of Western Europe in the matter of international Islamicist terrorism. Its bourgeois bliss did not protect this European capital from the murderous madness that has struck the United States, Indonesia, Morocco, Israel, and other places. In the aftermath of the Al Qaeda attack, the outrage in Spain was unforgettable: Almost a quarter of the country's population took to the streets in anger. No American could behold the images of the slaughter or the images of the protest against it without a stirring and deep solidarity. Dying in Madrid looked a lot like dying in New York; and the government of José María Aznar, like the government of George W. Bush, whatever its shortcomings, seemed wholly admirable in its resolve to fight force with force.

Within 48 hours, however, the grim grandeur of the situation had been undone by politics, as the Aznar government, which was expected to win the national election, misguidedly attempted to deceive the Spanish people with allegations of Basque responsibility for the bombings, and was thrown out of office by an electorate that was overwhelmingly opposed to its participation in the Iraqi war. The new government of the Socialists, led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, represents the more commonplace EU view of the world: the suspicion of force, the religion of diplomacy, the horror of American power, the reverence of the United Nations. Zapatero campaigned with a promise to withdraw Spain's troops from Iraq in the absence of the U.N.'s blessing, and he repeated his promise after his victory. So did the Spanish people do the work of Al Qaeda even as they mourned the victims of Al Qaeda? Such a judgment is imprecise: The jihadists are interested in apocalytics, not in politics. But the Spanish vote certainly said this: We will mourn, but we will not fight. Anybody who believes that the bombs in Madrid did not soften the spine and addle the moral sense of Spain is burying his head in the sand.

The New York Times, for example. Its editors called this sudden triumph of the Spanish left "an exercise in healthy democracy," as if the election had taken place in an atmosphere of tranquil and reasoned deliberation. (This is the same paper that always regrets the way in which Palestinian terror improves the political fortunes of the Israeli right.) And there followed this extraordinary homily:

> It is possible to support the battle against terrorism wholeheartedly and still oppose a political party that embraces the same cause. The Spanish people, who have suffered under the violence of Basque terrorists for years, undoubtedly feel a redoubled commitment to fight on and avenge the innocents who died in Madrid. That did not make them obliged to keep Prime Minister Aznar in power. Here in the United States, as much as the White House would like the elections to be about fear and national insecurity, they are a choice between two men and two political philosophies—not a referendum on terrorism.



Really? The Spanish election was most obviously a referendum on terrorism; and if the American election will not also be such an exercise, it will be because the Democrats will have persuaded Americans of their deadly seriousness in foreign affairs, which they have not yet done. To be sure, it is possible to oppose Al Qaeda and to oppose the war in Iraq. But about one thing we should be clear: It is not possible to oppose Al Qaeda and to oppose the United States. Such a view is not coherent and not serious. In the world as it actually exists, the most significant and the most effective enemy of Al Qaeda is the United States.

But the White House must not repair to its customary righteousness, either. The other lesson of the Spanish labyrinth is that the United States is now paying too high a price for the Bush administration's sectarian unilateralist hauteur. The war against terrorists, since it is a war against stateless fiends who live and plot in many countries, is by definition a multilateral war. We cannot fight this war alone and we cannot win this war alone. Was the trashing of all manner of international treaties and institutions really worth the alienation of so many European publics? Yes, yes, it is we who must lead; but leaders must have followers. The Bush administration should finally stop treating anti-Americanism like a compliment and start treating it like a problem. ■

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NOTEBOOK

The Immediate Death of Imminence

SILENT MAJORITY

LAST WEEK, JOHN KERRY ASSERTED that he'd met with foreign leaders who told him they hoped he would defeat President Bush in November. The White House immediately leaped on the claim, questioning its veracity and demanding that Kerry name names. "If you're going to make an accusation in the course of a presidential campaign, you've got to back it up with facts," Bush said on Tuesday. Added Press Secretary Scott McClellan, "One can only come to the conclusion that [Kerry's] simply making up these assertions to attack the president."

Now, it's entirely possible that Kerry was dissembling or at least exaggerating, but it's still highly ironic that the White House is questioning the accuracy of his basic charge. After all, a just-released Pew poll found that most Britons and a full 85 percent of French and Germans dislike the president, so it's not hard to believe some European leaders might favor a Kerry victory in the fall. Indeed, relations between Bush and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder were completely severed before the Iraq war. According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal* last April, "Commentators in Germany called the last eight months an 'ice age.' Bush-administration officials have called the ties 'poisoned.' ... The two haven't spoken since November. German media have reported Mr. Bush has declined to take calls from Mr. Schroeder."

It's also amusing for the Bush administration to suggest there's something wrong with keeping sensitive discussions with foreign leaders secret, given that it spent the run-up to the Iraq war insisting it had private assurances of foreign support while declining to name its putative allies. Last March, for example, Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters, "[T]here are fifteen other nations who, for one reason or another, do not wish to be publicly named but will

John Kerry

be supporting the coalition." The next day—just hours before the president ordered the first strikes on Baghdad—White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer was similarly unforthcoming when asked what foreign troops would join a U.S.-led invasion: "Well, I think that, as always, unless those nations explicitly authorize us to speak about who is sending combat forces in there, it's not my place to name them. ... But I think it's fair to say, when you take a look at the entire coalition of the willing, what you see are a sizable number of nations that share the United States people's commitment." Yes, and we think it's fair to assume that Kerry might have found a few that share his commitment as well.

THE ABCs OF IRAQI POLITICS

MUCH HAS CHANGED IN IRAQ A year after the U.S. invasion, but one constant survives: the ignorance of U.S. news networks when it comes to the Iraqi people. That lack of understanding was on clear display Monday, when ABC's "World News Tonight" ran a short piece on the loyalties Iraqi Shia feel to Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani and Moqtada Al Sadr. The very premise of the report was absurd. Sistani is one of the most important figures in Shia Islam, and his consistent advocacy of direct elections for an Iraqi government brought tens of thousands of Shia into the streets this January to derail America's best-laid plans. But it's Sadr who, in Peter Jennings's imagination, "is wildly popular with the poorest Shiites. He taps into the resentment in the underclass." Never mind that, when Sadr proclaimed a government last October, no one paid any attention.

Amusingly, even ABC couldn't show an equivalency between the two. "A year ago, only pictures of Saddam Hussein were publicly displayed in Iraq," Jennings intoned. "Today, there are pictures of the two Shiite leaders who have such different ideas about the future." But, tellingly, the only portrait ABC could find to broadcast of Sadr was a small photograph held up by someone's hand. (Not that it did any better with an image of Sistani: Bizarrely, ABC flashed on a portrait of slain cleric Mohammed Bakr Al Hakim instead.) What's more, ABC interviewed Sadr's own uncle, Hussein, who disputed any suggestion that his nephew rivaled Sistani. "There is no doubt that Ayatollah Sistani is the most powerful," the elder Sadr said. But Jennings didn't let the facts stand in the way of his angle, declaring that "whomever the Shiites rally to," they represent a potent and undeniable force. Not sure we can say the same for "World News Tonight."

FACE THE MUSIC

FOR MONTHS, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has insisted it never said the threat from Iraq was imminent. So we were gratified to see Donald Rumsfeld stumble and fall when confronted by

DAVID COWLES

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Bob Schieffer and Thomas Friedman on "Face the Nation" this Sunday. In response to a straightforward question—Schieffer asked, "If [Iraq] did not have these weapons of mass destruction, though, ... why then did they pose an immediate threat to us, to this country?"—Rumsfeld said:

> Well, you're the—you and a few other critics are the only people I've heard use the phrase 'immediate threat.' I didn't. The president didn't. And it's become kind of folklore that that's—that's what's happened. ... If you have any citations, I'd like to see 'em.

Then, like a gift from the Gods of Nexis, Friedman produced such a citation:

> FRIEDMAN: We have one here. It says "some have argued that the nu"—this is you speaking—"that the nuclear threat from Iraq is not imminent, that Saddam is at least five to seven years away from having nuclear weapons. I would not be so certain."
>
> RUMSFELD: And—and—
>
> FRIEDMAN: It was close to imminent.
>
> RUMSFELD: Well, I've—I've tried to be precise, and I've tried to be accurate. I'm s—suppose I've—
>
> FRIEDMAN: "No terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people and the stability of the world than the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq."
>
> RUMSFELD: Mm-hmm. It—my view of—of the situation was that he—he had—we—we believe, the best intelligence that we had and other countries had and that—that we believed and we still do not know—we will know.

Perhaps that will put the "imminence" debate to rest—once and for all. ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

THE GREAT DIVIDE: This week, ABC News released the results of a poll of 2,700 Iraqis taken a year after the war. According to the poll, 48 percent of Iraqis think the war was justified; 39 percent think it was wrong. Fifty-one percent oppose the presence of coalition forces; 39 percent support it. Except that's not the whole story.

The only reason those anemic pro-U.S. numbers are as high as they are is that they incorporate the massively pro-war, pro-U.S. feelings of Iraqi Kurds. When the poll disaggregates how Iraqi Arabs feel, the numbers shift substantially against the United States. For instance, look at the numbers on support for the invasion. Iraqis as a whole split in favor of it, 48 percent to 39 percent. But factor out the Kurds—87 percent of whom back it—and the picture gets bleaker. Iraqi Arabs are somewhat against the war: 40 percent say it was right, while 46 percent say it was wrong. (There's no religious breakdown, so we don't know how many of those respondents are Shia and how many are Sunni, which would be very helpful information.) Then take the question of whether the invasion "liberated" Iraq or "humiliated" it. In total, 42 percent said liberated, and 41 percent said humiliated. But, again, the Kurds split 82 percent to 11 percent in favor of liberation; among Arabs, just 33 percent said liberation, compared with 48 percent for humiliation—hardly an encouraging sign. On the question of American troops, the ethnic breakdown is significant as well. Kurds support the presence of coalition forces by a margin of 82 percent to 12 percent. Only 30 percent of Arabs feel the same way—and 60 percent oppose the American troop presence. These statistics don't bode particularly well for U.S. plans to negotiate an open-ended basing arrangement with a sovereign Iraqi government.

Nowhere is the Arab-Kurdish split starker than on the question of Iraq's future political structure. Respondents were offered the options of "unified country, central government in Baghdad," "regional states with a federal government," and "divided into separate independent states." An overwhelming 90 percent of Arabs prefer a centralized model, with only 5 percent favoring a federal Iraq. Among the Kurds, by contrast, just 26 percent want centralism, and 58 percent want a federal model. (The good news is that just 12 percent of Kurds favored independence.)

There is much else in the poll, but it all generally adds up to two conclusions. First, in the year since the war, we have resoundingly failed to live up to the expectations of the Iraqis. That's not to say we haven't helped—the poll also shows that consistent majorities of Iraqis consider themselves better off than before the war. But their sense of personal advancement has not translated into significant feelings of goodwill for the United States, at least among Iraqi Arabs. And, with only a few months before the transfer of power, there doesn't seem to be much we can do to turn that figure around.

Second, and more ominous still, there is a massive discrepancy between the political goals of the Arabs and the Kurds. Given that the provisional constitution signed earlier this month is likely to heighten rather than diminish these divisions, these numbers point to a formidable challenge in creating a united country.

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

ATTENTION DEFICIT: The Congressional Budget Office has just released a study putting the portion of this year's budget deficit that can be blamed on the weak economy—long the administration's preferred excuse—at a mere 6 percent. This would seem to call into question the administration's promises to cut the deficit in half over the next five years through some combination of economic growth and spending discipline. But, according to Tuesday's *New York Times*, the White House is sticking to its story: "J. T. Young, a spokesman for the White House budget office, ... cautioned that increases in tax revenues often lagged behind increased economic growth, and he noted that the budget was still being affected by higher costs for the military and domestic security."

So, according to J. T. Young, the reason the deficit picture looks so grim is that tax revenue are still way down, and military and homeland security spending are way up. Since the administration is currently proposing to make its tax cuts permanent—at a cost of more than $100 billion over the next five years and nearly $1 trillion over ten—and since it's projecting continued spending increases on defense and homeland security, which together account for by far the largest portion of domestic discretionary spending, exactly what part of this picture is supposed to improve?

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Islamabad Dispatch

Daddy's Girl

BY MASSOUD ANSARI

On February 4, Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, admitted he had sold nuclear technology to rogue states like North Korea and Libya. The United States responded by praising Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf for having exposed Khan's wrongdoing. Last month, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told reporters that Musharraf is "the right man [for Pakistan] at the right time." Even after Musharraf publicly pardoned Khan and refused to allow international inspectors to investigate Pakistan's nuclear program, the Bush administration still refrained from any criticism. Politically, the Bushies argued, Musharraf had done the best he could—after all, Khan was one of the most popular men in the country.

Yet Musharraf's motives for the pardon may have been less political and more personal. High-level sources in the Pakistani government say Khan's daughter Dina possesses highly incriminating documents and audiotapes showing that senior army officials, including Musharraf himself, knew for years about Khan's nuclear black market. Dina, they say, has wielded these documents as a weapon, using them to prevent the Pakistani government from jailing her father.

Khan was taken into Pakistani custody in early February after intelligence reports suggested he had sold nuclear centrifuges to Iran, Libya, and North Korea. Once in custody, Khan quickly confessed, and Musharraf told Western reporters that no one in the Pakistani military or government had been involved in his proliferation efforts. "Gen Musharraf reiterated that he had heard nothing of A. Q. Khan's nuclear smuggling" until now, *Financial Times* reported last month after a lengthy interview with Musharraf. The White House seemed to take the general at his word, with Secretary of State Colin Powell continuing to praise Musharraf for his cooperation in counterproliferation efforts.

But Musharraf should not be taken at his word. Pakistani government insiders say that, as international pressure mounted on Islamabad in late January to do something about Khan, Musharraf decided to initiate legal action against the scientist and some of his associates. In fact, they say, Musharraf's government began building a case against Khan for violating Pakistan's Official Secrecy Act by selling the country's nuclear know-how to foreign bidders. Pakistani officials had even found a former Khan associate willing to testify against the scientist in a potential trial.

At the eleventh hour, however, these plans were derailed. The reason? Pakistani authorities discovered that Khan had given his daughter a variety of documents and tapes. The documents, Pakistani intelligence officials say, suggest that since 1977 all of Pakistan's army chiefs of staff, including General Musharraf, were aware of Khan's dealings with North Korea and other rogue states. Some of the documents, they say, contain the signatures of former top defense ministry officials. (Musharraf's office has refused to comment on these allegations.) What's more, Khan told interrogators that the documents show top military officials taking millions of dollars in cuts from his shadowy nuclear deals. If necessary, the scientist warned, his daughter would take the documents to the press. "Doctor Khan revealed the existence of these documents to his interrogators and told them that these are in the safe custody of his daughter," said one source. That millions of dollars could have been siphoned from the deals is hardly unfeasible: *The New York Times* reported this week that Khan's network received $100 million just for the technology it sold to Libya.

By the time Pakistani interrogators learned of the documents, Dina was safely out of Pakistan and back in London, where she lives. "She was asked to defend her father from abroad in case the country's military government initiated legal proceedings against him," said one intelligence source privy to the negotiations with Dina. Government insiders say that, after the document revelations, senior government officials, including the head of Pakistan's powerful internal security agency, InterServices Intelligence, held exhaustive meetings with Khan. Khan's threat terrified Islamabad: The government had already been embarrassed, in late January, when two former government ministers revealed to the local media that several senior army officials had, in the 1990s, advocated selling nuclear technology to Iran. What's more, says one government insider, Musharraf feared that, if the documents were publicly revealed, Pakistan's enemies, including India, would gain comprehensive knowledge of the country's nuclear program.

Frantic, Islamabad backed down. The government told Khan it would offer him a conditional pardon, as long as he apologized to the nation, and the audiocassettes and documents were handed over to the government. In the wake of the agreement, several intelligence sources said, Khan signed a paper admitting his guilt and recorded an interview in which he apologized to the nation, taking sole responsibility for his actions and seemingly shifting blame away from Musharraf and the army establishment. The following day, Musharraf held a press conference to announce Khan's pardon.

But not everything has gone according to plan. Though Khan promised to get the documents back, Dina has not returned them. No one knows for sure why. Some intelligence officials believe

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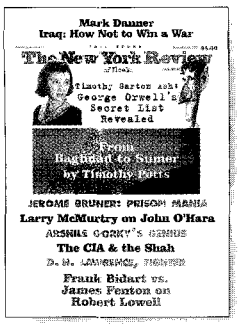

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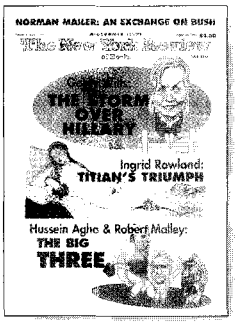

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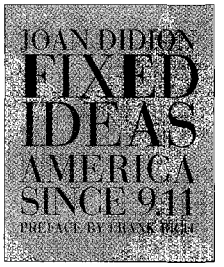

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she is holding onto them because she is worried that the government might harm her father once it took possession of all the incriminating evidence.

Consequently, Musharraf has stepped up the pressure on Khan. Recently, a government spokesman announced that Khan had not received a blanket pardon and could still be prosecuted for crimes discovered since the initial pardon was granted. What's more, sources close to Khan say, the government has disconnected all of Khan's telephones, increased the police presence around his Islamabad home, essentially restricted him to his house, and prevented him from meeting with most visitors. "They have changed all his phone numbers. When I sent my son to find out about his health, he was not allowed to meet [Khan]," says one friend of the scientist. As a result of this pressure, friends of Khan say, the 68-year-old scientist recently suffered a minor heart attack and was taken to a military hospital in Rawalpindi, the Pakistani army compound. (The Pakistani government denies Khan had a heart attack.)

Even Bush administration officials appear to be growing suspicious of the machinations in Pakistan. This week, *The New York Times* reported that Powell admitted that the Pakistani military might have been more extensively involved in Khan's proliferation efforts than previously thought. If Dina spills the beans, we'll know for sure. ■

Campaign Journal

Troop Strength

BY RYAN LIZZA

EACH FEBRUARY, AFTER the president's budget is unveiled, a coalition of four veterans' groups—Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, and Paralyzed Veterans of America—releases a critique of the administration's spending priorities for vets. Known as *The Independent Budget*, it has rarely had anything positive to say during the Bush presidency. In 2002, the document was accompanied by a statement declaring, "What is being touted as 'an historic increase in spending for veterans health care' is in reality an attempt to sugar coat a bitter pill the Bush administration wants sick and disabled veterans to swallow," namely a budget that "would do little to improve the funding picture for veterans health care." Last year, the authors of *The Independent Budget* were harsher still, stating flatly, "[T]he men and women who sacrificed for our country have been betrayed. ... So much for promises."

Two weeks ago, Joseph L. Fox, the silver-bearded president of Paralyzed Veterans of America, made his annual trek to Capitol Hill to testify about President Bush's latest outrage. Speaking before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, Fox brought along one of his group's newest members, Paul Gardner, a Marine paralyzed in an Iraqi firefight last year. The new Bush budget, Fox explained, was the worst yet. "The administration's budget request for health care is a shocking one," he announced, "providing once again a woefully inadequate funding level for sick and disabled veterans." Bush's request was filled with "budgetary gimmicks and accounting sleight of hand" and was "the smallest health care appropriation request of any administration in nearly a decade."

Whether or not Bush has been paying attention to Fox and the veterans' groups he represents, it's clear that John Kerry has. Indeed, the Massachusetts senator's platform on veterans' issues reads as though it was lifted from the most recent *The Independent Budget*. There has been a great deal of attention paid to whether Kerry's status as a decorated veteran would enable him to win more votes among veterans and the military than another Democrat might. But Kerry's pitch to this audience goes well beyond his biography. For months, Democrats have been salivating over the prospect that the anger of veterans' groups, the frustration of military families whose loved ones are away on extended troop rotations, and even the discontent of the troops themselves have combined to create a perfect storm of opportunity for Kerry to win a large chunk of the military vote.

"THE MILITARY VOTE" is actually a misnomer. Though it suggests a monolithic group of voters, the truth is there is very little data available about how Americans tied to the military actually cast their ballots. Logistically, it's difficult to survey troops serving abroad, and, historically, exit polls at home haven't asked questions about military service. But Kerry advisers and outside academics who study the armed services divide the military vote up into four basic categories—current service members, reservists and National Guard members, military families, and veterans—each with a varying degree of potential for the Democratic nominee this year.

The least fertile territory for Kerry is the first of these groups, the 1.4 million active-duty soldiers. What little evidence is available suggests that these men and women remain pro-Bush and culturally alienated from the Democratic Party. The rule of thumb that they vote about two to one for Republicans doesn't seem to have changed despite their unending service since September 11, 2001. The most recent survey of active-duty personnel, known as the Military Times Poll and conducted last fall by the publisher of *Army Times*, shows that the pro-GOP trends remain intact: 57 percent of respondents said they were Republicans, compared with just 13 percent Democrats and 18 percent independents. (Among the civilian population, by contrast, the split is roughly one-third for each category.) Active-duty soldiers attend religious services more often than civilians, and 62 percent view the state of moral values in America negatively—both strong indicators of GOP leanings. At a time when

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Gallup recorded Bush's overall job-approval rating at 55 percent, the Military Time Poll registered it at 67 percent. Obviously, these are not natural Kerry voters.

But some cracks have begun to show. Support for the war in Iraq among active-duty troops closely tracks public opinion in general. And the Military Times Poll showed approval of Bush's handling of the war to be a surprisingly tepid 56 percent. More troubling for Bush, there seems to be growing resentment against the civilians in the Pentagon. Military Times found 40 percent disagreed with the statement that "the nation's civilian leadership has my best interest at heart." And, perhaps most worrisome for an administration that promised soldiers in 2000 that "help is on the way," a staggering 77 percent say the military is stretched too thin to be effective. Moreover, even these numbers may exaggerate Bush's support, as they are based on readers of Military Times publications, who tend to be older, higher in rank, and more conservative than the average soldier.

Next, there are the 1.2 million men and women in the National Guard and Reserves. Here, too, the data is spotty and anecdotal, but Kerry may have an opening. Last summer, a team of reporters from *Stars and Stripes* spent three weeks interviewing servicemembers and found a deep divide between the attitudes of active-duty soldiers and Guard and Reserve troops, the so-called weekend warriors who never expected to dodge bullets in Iraq but now comprise almost half of American troops there. Morale among reservists in Iraq is by far the lowest of all the services. Seventy-one percent say their unit's morale is low or very low. While active-duty troops are told they will be in Iraq for no longer than a year, Guard and Reserves are told to expect a two-year stay. Many of the complaints documented by *Stars and Stripes* seem to have formed the basis for Kerry applause lines. Soldiers said they were sent into battle without enough armored plates for their flak jackets and vehicles. One unit pleaded with U.S. hospitals to donate medical supplies. Another had to pool resources to buy a refrigerator. Fifty-five percent said they were not likely to reenlist. "I strongly believe that the current administration is more concerned with re-election politics and less on doing the right thing," one reservist told *Stars and Stripes*. "After this whole ordeal is over, I think you will see the ranks of the Army Reserve decimated."

Kerry may have a greater opportunity still pursuing the votes not of soldiers themselves but of their families. "The one place where Kerry has an appeal is military households," says Peter Feaver, a professor at Duke University who studies the political culture of the military and is generally skeptical of claims that Democrats have an opening with military voters. "He may have an advantage there. Not all of them, but the ones of National Guard or Reserve who are over-mobilized or poorly mobilized to serve in Iraq." One of the few pieces of recent data about how these families feel about Bush doesn't bode well for him. A poll in September pegged Bush's approval rating at 36 percent among the relatives of servicemembers.

But the bloc of "military voters" that might have the greatest Democratic potential is the largest of all: veterans. There are some 27 million veterans nationwide, making up about 20 percent of the overall electorate. Kerry has done more to target them than any other military subgroup. His advisers believe that his status as a decorated vet will earn him a hearing with these voters that Al Gore never got—and they're determined to make the most of it. "We think that those folks are more available to us than [to] lots of other Democrats for two basic reasons," says a senior adviser. First, "John Kerry is a veteran and has fought for vets his entire career. The veterans' community knows that. Second, is that this administration has done a lot to tick off the veterans' communities—veterans' health benefits, pensions, and a variety of other issues. There is a push away from Bush, and there's a pull toward John Kerry."

As Fox's annual complaints suggest, many veterans are angry with Bush's approach to veterans' issues. Most of the hostility revolves around the administration's annual attempt to rein in the cost of benefits for veterans, an issue that plagues every president. Bush has attempted to change eligibility rules for some veterans' benefits, increase co-payments and fees, and shift vets into HMOs. On most issues, he has retreated in the face of criticism from groups like Fox's. "Bush is stuck with the veterans' entitlements issue, which is always a curse for the incumbent," says Feaver. "It's just unsustainable. Every administration tries to make fiscal decisions that are perceived as betrayals of promises. The vets say they were promised cradle-to-grave coverage basically in a socialized medical system like Canada, and that's just too costly. The administration is trying to move them out and into managed care, and that's painful for vets."

THIS WEEK, KERRY gave a speech before veterans and military family members in Washington, D.C., titled "Protecting Our Military Families in Times of War." (Nicely illustrating the political splits between different groups of military voters, Bush was scheduled to give a speech the next day before thousands of active-duty soldiers in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.) Unsurprisingly, Kerry focused on the issues most important to the three groups of military voters he has the most chance to win. First, to relieve the stress on the Guard and Reserves (as well as the active-duty soldiers who say readiness has plummeted), he promised to increase the active-duty Army by 40,000 troops. Second, he proposed a "Military Family Bill of Rights" that would improve housing, increase access to health and dental care, enhance education for the children of servicemembers, and ease the burden of deployments by making them more predictable and by making the stipend families get when their loved ones go abroad permanent and indexed to inflation. Finally, Kerry championed many of the entitlement issues veterans have been calling for in recent years—none more important than his call to remove veterans' health care from the discretionary budget process entirely and make annual VA budgets mandatory.

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In 2000, Bush's vision for the military was fewer deployments abroad and more spending for troops at home. He criticized Bill Clinton's interventions in Somalia and Haiti and demanded to know what the exit strategy was for Kosovo. He wanted an army that cost more and did less. Now the parties have switched. It's Kerry who wants to ease the military's rotation schedule and lavish spending on veterans and military families. This year, it is the Democrats whose promise to American soldiers is, "Help is on the way." ■

What's French for Enron?

Accounts Due

BY CLAY RISEN

IT WAS FEBRUARY 2002, and Frits Bolkestein, the European Commission's (EC) chief financial regulator, was feeling more than a touch of schadenfreude. At the height of the Enron scandal, financial misdeeds were becoming public at WorldCom, Tyco, Adelphia, and a host of other U.S. companies—proof to Bolkestein that U.S. capitalism was hopelessly corrupt. In an interview with *Financial Times*, Bolkestein gloated, "If you look at the various scandals in the financial field, it seems they have occurred more in the U.S. than in Europe, or am I being rude saying that?" One could almost see the sneer creeping across his face.

Two years later, a series of European corporate scandals has surely wiped away that smile. If 2002 was the year of U.S. corporate malfeasance, 2003 was Europe's turn: Accounting fraud and other criminal activities were uncovered at Switzerland's Adecco, the Netherlands' Ahold, and, of course, Parmalat, the Italian dairy concern whose owners may have defrauded investors of billions, including more than $1.5 billion from American investors. Whereas two years ago Europeans claimed that Enron proved the superiority of European corporate culture, now many admit that, in fact, fraud can happen anywhere.

What they won't admit is why. The Parmalat scandal is more evidence that European business culture is becoming more global and, almost by definition, more American. But, while the structure of European business is changing—moving not only toward regional integration but toward distinctly American practices like capital market financing as well—many Europeans are nevertheless slow to push for commensurate changes in how it is regulated. As a result, despite heated rhetoric post-Parmalat, there has been little effort to move toward the stronger enforcement mechanisms required by a more open, American-style system. So, for all Europe's mockery of American cowboy capitalism, the next Enrons will probably occur not on our side of the Atlantic, but on theirs.

IT'S EASY TO see Bolkestein as the bad guy, the continent's version of disgraced Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair Harvey Pitt—a corporate shill who pays lip service to reform but, in the end, blocks it. Last month, in the wake of Parmalat, Bolkestein told the European parliament that "the financial-services industry had better get its act together and do so fast. We need some real industry leadership to stand up and take charge—to clear out the crooks, expose their unscrupulous practices, and curb excessive greed." Fortunately, he said, the Commission was already working on a series of governance reforms inspired by the Enron scandal, and it was set to adopt the new universal accounting standards being devised by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB). Problem solved, right?

Wrong. The problem with Bolkestein's announcement is that, at the same time he is promising to implement IASB rules, he is trying to block some of the most important—and controversial—planks in the board's new rulebook, the bulk of which have already been approved. Called Directives 32 and 39, they would require adherents to account for fluctuations in the value of derivatives (financial instruments, such as futures, that derive value from the value of something else) held by their firm. Because derivatives provide an easy way to hide losses (this was one of the many tricks pulled by Enron), making companies account for them would go a long way toward curtailing fraud. But the continent's banks, along with the French government, oppose the measures, saying that derivatives' inherent volatility could expose them to excessive balance-sheet volatility, and they pressured Bolkestein to block it. He complied readily, accusing the IASB of crafting rules without discussing them with the EC and even threatening that "future [International Accounting Standards] endorsement will become more difficult unless ways and means are found to ensure that the standards-setting procedures become more open." Soon after, he added that, if the IASB continued to press the directives, he would allow individual member states to ignore them, negating the very purpose of universal standards.

Thanks to intransigence on the part of European officials like Bolkestein, there is little chance that any substantively new regulations will emerge from the Parmalat scandal beyond those that had already been planned following Enron (which, though definitely a step forward, are inadequate to the long-term task at hand). In February, Bolkestein announced that "the Commission will not rush headlong into announcing new legislative initiatives—beyond those already announced. ... What is required now is a pause for reflection." And, if this is the Commission's attitude toward reform just months after its largest corporate scandal in years, imagine how resistant it will be once the Parmalat fires die down.

But, while it's convenient to blame Bolkestein for the Commission's foot-dragging, he is more a consequence of Europe's insular business culture than its cause. Though Europe may offer bountiful consumer and labor protec-

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tions, it also maintains a powerful tradition of cronyism in which capital is controlled by a tight matrix of government institutions, state-run banks, and large corporations. "The EU is driven more by business interests than by political interests," says Paul Frentrop, a professor of corporate governance at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands. "Voters in EU countries do not care much about the EU, as evidenced by the low turnout at elections for the EU parliament. It's the big multinational companies that want one market. ... A pro–big business attitude is an integrated part of European institutions." As a result, the Commission—which implements and oversees the rules governing the EU—is loath to enact policies that, while good for business ethics, are viewed as bad for big businesses themselves.

But even that isn't the whole story. Traditionally, European and U.S. business cultures have been defined in part by how much influence outsiders wield over a company's operations. In the United States, there is a strong shareholder ethic, in which anyone, at least in theory, can gain influence over a company by purchasing shares in it. Moreover, because pension funds invest a large share of their money in stock and bond markets, even average Americans who do not own stocks directly have a vested interest in the country's corporate health. And, because companies usually raise capital through public measures, such as bond or stock issues, there is in turn a sense of responsibility to the investing public. As a result, going back well before Calvin Coolidge issued his famous dictum that "the business of America is business," there has been a strong connection between the interests of U.S. business and the nation as a whole; and our regulatory philosophy, though not always effective in practice, has developed along those lines.

The opposite has been true in Europe. European companies have traditionally raised capital through the continent's heavily insulated (and historically government-run) banking system or through retained earnings rather than from the public. Pensions are mostly guaranteed by the state, which protects the average citizen from the rise and fall of the stock and bond markets but also removes most incentives for him to care about what goes on in the corporate world. And, thanks to the legacy of socialism running through European mass culture, there has long been public distrust of the corporate world and distaste for individual investing. Not surprisingly, European corporate and accounting regulations reflect this system's needs and facilitate its operation. They provide fewer shareholder protections and less corporate information to the public, but they also make it easier for banks and large companies to work together. Fundamentally, Europeans rely on a strong government hand in the economy, rather than a strongly regulated private sector, to keep fraud under control.

This would be all well and good if European business weren't moving quickly away from the continent's traditional model. Like most regions of the world, the European economy took off during the late '90s, a trend *BusinessWeek* attributed to Europe's "U.S.-style New Economy," in which the euro and rapidly expanding capital markets suddenly made fast growth a possibility. And the continued pace of privatization—especially in the banking sector—rendered obsolete the crony capitalism that had kept government and corporate interests in line for so long. No longer, therefore, could government serve as a brake on the private sector. Once this trend reached critical mass, it was unstoppable—even when the European economy slowed significantly a few years ago, the reaction from most EU governments wasn't to say the experiment had failed but rather that it hadn't gone far enough. Privatization, promoted by even the Socialist government of former French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, continues apace, and, with ongoing EU economic integration and the opening of European capital markets to outside investors, the continent is suddenly a much different economic place.

As a result, there is a dangerous disconnect between the new reality of the European business world and the outdated rules that still govern it. "What we see in Europe is a push toward more capital market financing, and that requires changes in oversight," says Christian Leuz, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. Among other things, Europe needs stronger securities oversight, shareholder protections, and, above all, uniform enforcement—if not an actual policing body akin to the SEC. (Even tough regulations that could have outed Parmalat earlier would have done little good in Italy, where current enforcement mechanisms are weak.) "The U.S. got securities regulation, including the SEC, after the 1929 crash. No European country did," says Frentrop. "What Europe needs most urgently are security laws that protect investors"—not to mention enforceable corporate governance and accounting rules.

This is not to suggest that U.S. reforms have insulated the United States from malfeasance. But the extent of recent U.S. regulatory changes—and the scope of further changes being considered—goes far beyond anything being contemplated in Europe. That's partly because of the complexities of developing Union-wide rules. But Europe's apparent unwillingness to push the envelope when new regulatory thinking is so obviously needed is striking. After Enron, Congress quickly passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which greatly improved the country's corporate governance and accounting rules, most significantly by creating the Public Company Accounting and Oversight Board to monitor and enforce compliance. And the SEC has continued to press for reform, such as its soon-to-be-proposed requirement to allow shareholders to more easily vote out company directors. These changes are relatively uncontroversial in the United States, but they remain a regulator's dream in Europe. There, the gap between regulatory philosophy and economic reality dwarfs anything in the United States, and it's only a matter of time before greedy corporate types start exploiting it.

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INDEED, IT SEEMS they have already begun. Last year's scandal at the Dutch grocery concern Ahold erupted after evidence emerged that company managers, having been given loads of stock options, inflated the earnings of its American subsidiary, U.S. Foodservice. In the old world of European business, this probably would not have happened, not only because stock options were rarely used but because the slow pace of the continent's capital markets meant there was little to be gained—at least in terms of stock prices—by manipulating earnings. And, in the wake of the mid-'90s privatization of Italy's banking sector, Parmalat's directors used U.S.-based banks to convince investors that they held billions in assets, which in turn allowed them to raise real capital through bond issues.

These scandals also highlight the risks that an insufficiently regulated continental economy poses for the United States. As Europe begins to raise capital from markets and outside investors—including those across the Atlantic—those markets and investors are put at risk. American investors lost more than $1.5 billion in the Parmalat scandal, and, with the growing number of European firms registered with U.S. stock exchanges, the harm future scandals could do to the American investment community can only grow. This is one reason the SEC recently announced that by 2005 all European companies that register with U.S. stock markets will have to abide by all IASB standards, regardless of what the EC or the companies' home countries require.

Things will likely get worse as European capital markets open even more and become more central to private financing. "History teaches us that scandals erupt after a strong inflow of new money—i.e., new participants from the public—into the capital markets," says Frentrop. So Parmalat, Ahold, and other scandals are not outlier examples of good European businesses gone wrong; they're examples of what happens when a system outgrows the rules that had guided it. What Europe needs now is U.S.-style regulation to go with its U.S.-style capitalism. Let's hope someone tells Frits Bolkestein. ■

Scott McClellan, bad liar.

Honest Mistake

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

ON THE MORNING of February 10, the Bush administration released payroll records from President Bush's National Guard stint 30 years before. The records were far from conclusive, and they fell short of Bush's earlier promise to release all documents pertaining to his service. Having been starved of information on the subject—and then teased with the promise of a full meal, only to be tossed a few scraps—the White House press corps was ravenous and baying for more.

It was not, in other words, a good day to be White House press secretary. But it's hard to imagine how the day could have gone much worse than it did for Scott McClellan, Bush's chief spokesman.

The first question was not terribly hostile: Was Bush's attendance score—56 points, with 50 as the requirement—considered good? McClellan replied with a nonanswer, declaring, "These documents clearly show that the president fulfilled his duties." The next questioner, John Roberts of CBS News, followed up by asking about missing months on the payroll records. McClellan again replied that "these records verify that he met the requirements necessary to fulfill his duties." Roberts shot back, "That wasn't my question, Scott." McClellan began to repeat his mantra for the third time, and Roberts interrupted: "Scott, that wasn't my question, and you know it wasn't my question." McClellan stammered, "These records—these records I'm holding here clearly document the president fulfilling his duties in the National Guard." Roberts again demanded, "I asked a simple question; how about a simple answer?" McClellan continued his rote dodges: "We have provided you these documents that show clearly that the president of the United States fulfilled his duties." On and on the torment went. Reporters badgered McClellan with questions like, "Is that a yes? Is that a yes?" and "You have not answered that question." In response, he repeated some version of the line "these documents show the president fulfilled his duties" a remarkable 24 times. Needless to say, this didn't put the issue to rest.

Displays of this sort have grown increasingly frequent. For Bush's supporters, McClellan's briefings are a source of despair. "At best, Bush's aides respond defensively," lamented an editorial in *The Weekly Standard* last week. "At worst, their clumsiness turns a minor flap into a prolonged controversy." For Bush's critics, they offer a ripe comic target—routinely excerpted in such diverse venues as Joshua Marshall's TalkingPointsMemo.com Web log and "The Daily Show" on Comedy Central. And yet even the most determined Bush haters will find that, as they watch the hapless McClellan beaten about the head almost every day by the White House press corps, their schadenfreude eventually gives way to pity. It doesn't matter whether you think the media's questioning is fully justified or, indeed, long overdue. You can't help but feel compassion for a man so plainly unequal to the competition.

McClellan's ineptitude is made all the more noticeable by the contrast it poses with Ari Fleischer, his syrup-tongued predecessor. Fleischer could spin elaborate webs of obfuscation, leaving the press corps mystified and docile, albeit somewhat resentful as well. Every sentence he uttered came out in the same bored affectation. The most out-

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rageous lie sounded, in his telling, like a truism so obvious it barely deserved mentioning. Most people find such behavior deeply unnatural. When asked a direct question, our natural impulse is to answer it honestly. The capacity to do otherwise is useful for any press secretary but particularly so for the current administration, whose domestic agenda has never commanded popular support and which relies heavily upon secrecy and message discipline. Fleischer was in this sense the perfect Bush press secretary. His ability to prevaricate and dodge, without betraying himself through physical or verbal tics, represented a kind of genius. Alas, what came so easily to Fleischer utterly eludes McClellan. If the two of them ever sat down at a poker table, Fleischer would probably walk away with all of McClellan's money and the shirt off his back.

In a certain sense, this is to McClellan's credit: He's not a natural liar. Some of the best insight into the psychology of deceit can be found in the works of playwright and director David Mamet. In Mamet's 1983 play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, weak-willed insurance salesman George Aaronow tells consummate pro Ricky Roma, "When I talk to the police, I get nervous." "Yeah. You know who doesn't?" Roma replies. "Thieves." Fleischer had the soul of a thief. McClellan doesn't. Indeed, all the White House reporters I spoke with went out of their way to praise him as a human being, especially in contrast with Fleischer. "Scott is, at core, an honest man, and Fleischer is, at core, a dishonest man," one puts it. "[McClellan] has a real handicap in this [job] in that he's a decent guy."

McClellan is as effective as Fleischer when he's asked questions that can be answered honestly—about, say, where the president is traveling next or what he thinks of some foreign development or well-established domestic issue. But, when forced onto difficult terrain, he is the picture of discomfort. He averts his eyes from his questioners, often appearing to recite from prepared talking points on the podium. He shifts his weight from foot to foot, the frequency of these shifts depending upon his level of anxiety. (At the highest level, his rocking grows so violent that he steadies himself by gripping the podium with both hands, as if to keep from toppling over.) Like a bad card player, he overcompensates for his uncertainty with emphatic gestures—folding his lower lip, furrowing his brow. Indeed, McClellan is a near-perfect embodiment of the physical manifestations of dishonesty listed by high-profile jury screener Jo-Ellan Dimitrius in her book *Reading People*. The list begins:

Shifty or wandering eyes
Any type of fidgeting
Rapid speech
Change in voice
Shifting back and forth in one's feet or in a chair
Any signs of nervousness
An exaggerated version of the "sincere, furrowed-brow look"

McCLELLAN SIGNALS HIS discomfort not only through his appearance but through the substance of his replies as well. While not exactly a skilled orator, in normal circumstances he's capable of stringing coherent thoughts together. In the middle of one exchange last month, for example, a reporter inquired about Bush's visit to NASCAR. McClellan offered up a garrulous peroration of 344 words. When he has to dissemble, though, his sentences become short and choppy, and he relies heavily upon pat phrases. Consider this exchange, again with CBS's Roberts, on gay marriage from a few weeks ago:

Q: Scott, on the day's other big announcement, four years ago in the South Carolina primary debate, the president was asked, "So, if a state were voting on gay marriage, you would suggest to that state not to approve it?" And the response of the president was, "The state can do what they want to do." When did the president change his mind that the issue of gay marriage was not a matter for states and, in fact, was a federal issue?
McCLELLAN: John, the president has always firmly believed that marriage is

Unlike his predecessor, Ari Fleischer, White House spokesman Scott McClellan has no aptitude for prevarication and obfuscation. "He has a real handicap in this in that he's a decent guy," says one White House reporter.

AP PHOTO/CHARLES DHARAPAK

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a sacred institution between a man and a woman. He has always held that view. And I think what you're referring to is that the president has talked about how states have the right to enter into their own legal arrangements. And that's what the president is referring to.

Q: The words in the question were "gay marriage," and I do realize that the president has opposed gay marriage, but when did he—

McCLELLAN: The president's view was very well-known during the campaign of 2000, that he believes marriage is a sacred institution. And he supported efforts to protect and defend the sanctity of marriage.

Q: Which is what I just said. But, my question was, to go to the actual substance of my question, was, when did the president change his mind that this was not an issue for states and, in fact, was a federal issue?

McCLELLAN: Again, I dispute the premise of your question. His views have always been well-known on this very issue.

Q: Yes, but he always described it as a state issue. Now he's describing it as a federal issue. When did he change his mind?

McCLELLAN: No, no, he said that states have the right to enter into their own legal arrangements.

When Fleischer appeared similarly trapped, he would launch into answers so verbose and digressive that, by the end, reporters would have lost their train of thought altogether. Because McClellan can't filibuster as effectively, he allows his adversaries to badger him repetitively. And, where Fleischer's flights of illogic would baffle the press, McClellan's tend to trip him up instead. During another grilling on Bush's National Guard service, a reporter asked why Bush had failed to pass his physical exam in 1972. McClellan simultaneously argued that he had already answered the question and that it didn't merit answering: "I think this was all addressed previously. I think that, again, this goes to show that some are not interested in the facts of whether or not he served; they're interested in trolling for trash and using this issue for partisan political gain." The press immediately seized on McClellan's first argument: "What was the answer previous to this?" one reporter asked. McClellan tried to retreat to his second argument, explaining, "[T]here are some that want us to engage in gutter politics. I'm not going to engage in gutter politics." But he'd already hemmed himself in. "But you were suggesting that you'd answered the question previously," he was again told. McClellan proceeded to alternate between his arguments—"I put out a response to that question yesterday," "I'm not going to engage in gutter politics," "Well, we've been through these issues"—growing more exasperated with each iteration. Finally, visibly upset, he pleaded with the press corps, "No, we went through these—no, we went—we've already addressed this issue. We went through it previously. We went through it four years ago for sure."

As a matter of fact, Bush didn't go through anything like this four years ago. One reason may be that his chief spokesman back then wasn't Scott McClellan. ■

The secrets of John Bolton's success.

World of Difference

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

WHAT'S SO RUDE about Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton? Iran's Foreign Ministry has called Bolton "rude" and "undiplomatic." North Korea has called Bolton "rude," too—not to mention "human scum," "an animal running about recklessly," and "an ugly fellow who cannot be regarded as a human being." Then there is Terre Cass, a court administrator in Florida, where, during the 2000 Bush-Gore recount, Bolton and his signature *Easy Rider* mustache became a media icon. Cass said Bolton, who spent his days sandwiched between members of the Palm Beach County Canvassing Board inspecting chads for the Bush team, "was very rude."

But rudeness—or, as Bolton's supporters prefer, bluntness—has its uses. Upon his arrival in Florida, Bolton reportedly barked, "I'm with the Bush-Cheney team, and I'm here to stop the count." When he did exactly that, a grateful Dick Cheney told an audience at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) that Bolton's job in the new administration should be "anything he wants." Indeed, no sooner had Bolton finished accomplishing his aims in Boca Raton than he was rewarded with a high-ranking State position and set about accomplishing his aims on the international scene. Before long, he had engineered America's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, established a harder line against North Korea and Iran, scuttled a draft protocol on enforcing the Biological Weapons Convention, waged a successful campaign to oust the chief of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemi-

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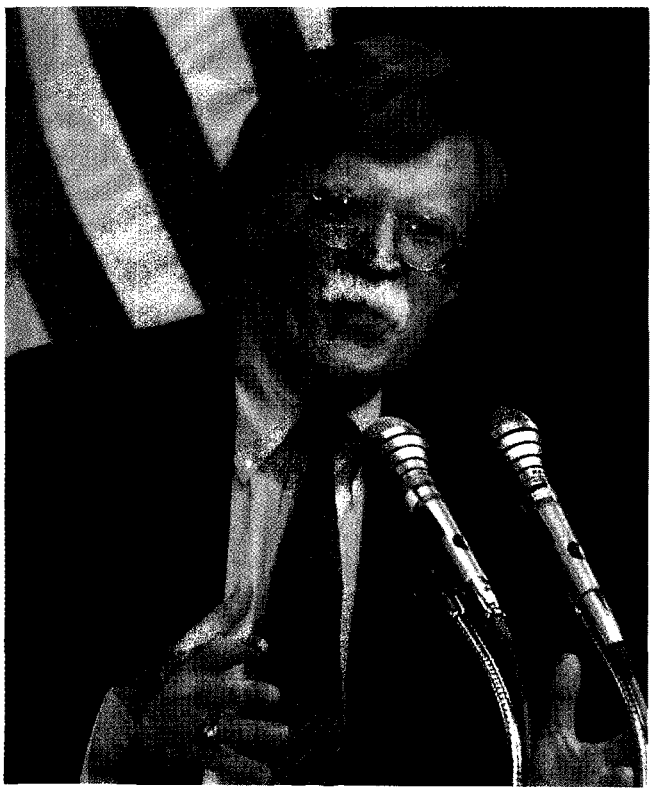
cal Weapons, and set the stage for America's abandonment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). And that was only year one.

The secret to Bolton's record is that, in a foreign policy team divided roughly between ideologues with no managerial skills and managerial types with no ideas, Bolton is that rare commodity: an operator *and* an ideologue. Bolton the operator is the man charged by Senator Joe Biden with being "too competent," a man who supposedly snacks on foreign service officers, lectures diplomats on their irrelevance, and clocks more travel miles than any of his peers. Bolton the ideologue is the man whose office walls are lined with inscribed photographs of conservative luminaries, who operates, according to *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, as "the neocons' man at State." The portrait gets Bolton half right. Bolton surely qualifies as a conservative—just not the kind Krugman has in mind. If anything, in fact, Bolton amounts to a walking repudiation of neoconservatism. Which helps explain why he has accomplished more than anyone else on Bush's foreign policy team.

AS FORMER LIBERALS whose democratic idealism still infuses their views of the world, neoconservatives routinely find themselves charged with being the heirs of Woodrow Wilson's "crusading" foreign policy style. No one has ever applied the adjective "Wilsonian" to John Bolton. And, as anyone who bears the slightest familiarity with Bolton's catalogue of speeches and writings will tell you, there is nothing remotely "neo" about him. Rather than echoes of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, one hears from Bolton echoes of the postwar conservatism of the early *National Review*, of Barry Goldwater (who Bolton campaigned for), of Jesse Helms—who once boasted, "John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would stand at Armageddon."



John Bolton defends America the only way he knows how: bluntly.

AP PHOTO/YUN JAI-HYOUNG

Testimonials such as these prompt his detractors to accuse Bolton of practicing, in the words of *The Nation*'s Ian Williams, "diplomatic redneckery." That is one way of putting it. Realism is another. Yet, unlike earlier devotees of realpolitik—such as Reinhold Niebuhr, who complained that the United States was "still inclined to pretend that our power is exercised by a peculiarly virtuous nation"—Bolton's is a fiercely nationalistic brand of realism. "I am pro-American," Bolton has said. "That means defending American interests as vigorously as possible and seeing yourself as an advocate for the U.S. rather than as a guardian of the world itself." Like his neoconservative counterparts at the Pentagon, he believes that, absent the robust assertion of U.S. power, a fundamentally Hobbesian international scene will erode. Unlike them, he does not believe the spread of American ideals can ameliorate this condition. This, needless to say, makes his job much easier.

Idealism may be a spur to reason, but, in a world that in recent years has allowed for the assertion of America's geopolitical weight but that has also greeted its attempt to promote universal ideals as "delusional" (in the words of Egyptian autocrat Hosni Mubarak), Bolton's preference for an "interests-based foreign policy grounded in a concrete agenda of protecting particular peoples and territories" has proved much simpler to accomplish. Involving a sense of limits, such interests have certainly been more easily achieved than the Bush administration's avowed aim of a "global democratic revolution." Rather than the construction of a new world order, after all, a vision like Bolton's merely requires tearing down the old.

This happens to be his specialty. With Bolton at the helm, Senator Byron Dorgan warned, the United States would "abandon ABM, ... build a destabilizing national missile defense system, abandon the Kyoto treaty, suspend missile talks with North Korea, [and] oppose the International Criminal Court." He was right. The first element to go was a proposal to regulate the trade in small arms, made at a U.N. conference in the summer of 2001, which Bolton effectively torpedoed by invoking America's "cultural tradition of hunting and sport shooting." Then came a U.N. proposal to enforce the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which Bolton also scuttled on grounds of national sovereignty. Finally, Bolton's campaign to apply "a bottle of Wite-Out" to America's signature on the treaty establishing the ICC culminated in the White House doing just that. Though technically it fell outside his jurisdiction, once the decision had been made to blot out the treaty, Bolton's was the signature affixed to the letter informing Kofi Annan of the news. It was, Bolton told *The Wall Street Journal*, "the happiest moment of my life."

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Few thought the moment would last, yet the international community hasn't been able to stop Bolton from chipping away at its foundations. Intelligence cables, for example, reveal foreign officials complaining bitterly about Bolton, yet, at the end of the day, the very same officials have ended up embracing his proposals. The orchestration of America's withdrawal from the ABM treaty offers a case in point. When Bolton informed his Russian counterparts that he didn't view the treaty as a "permanent" accord and that the United States could withdraw from the agreement anytime it wished, "the arms control guys in the room looked like they were going to pass out," says a member of the negotiating team. The fact remains, however, that ABM defenders had argued for years that, were the United States to abandon the treaty, a new arms race would ensue. Yet the truth turned out to be exactly the reverse: Rather than build up their arsenal in the aftermath of the U.S. decision, the Russians pledged to slash it dramatically under the terms of a treaty Bolton hammered out with Moscow.

THE MAJOR EFFORTS to stop Bolton, in fact, come mostly from within his own building. This is nothing new. As chief of the Reagan Justice Department's Civil Division, Bolton's run-ins with the bureaucracy prompted Patricia Schroeder to liken him to Captain Queeg. As an assistant secretary of state during the first Bush administration, Bolton ruffled pinstripes at Foggy Bottom when the administration sent him—over the head of U.N. Ambassador Thomas Pickering, a career diplomat the Bushies never fully trusted—to the U.N. Security Council, where he blunted an anti-Israel resolution in the works. Today, too, foreign service officers carp about Bolton the "anti-diplomat." During his 8:15 a.m. meetings with the assistant secretaries of state who report to him, for instance, the bureau chiefs stand the entire time, an indignity that has become part of Foggy Bottom mythology. Bolton's appetite for intelligence reports has led to run-ins with State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, whose staffers object to what they see as his back channels to the CIA. He has clashed repeatedly with the Bureau of Nonproliferation, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Bolton's aides, too—all but one of them political appointees and several recruited from AEI—have stirred resentment in the diplomatic ranks. The State Department's Near East hands, for example, grew so exasperated with Bolton's Middle East point man, David Wurmser, that they complained to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and henceforth refused to deal with him.

At one point last year, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones went so far as to organize a mini-revolt against Bolton, penning a memo to Colin Powell, co-signed by the assistant secretaries from every regional bureau, which complained that Bolton's campaign for bilateral agreements exempting Americans from prosecution by the ICC had been a failure and should be abandoned. In response to the memo, Powell called a meeting between Bolton and the assistant secretaries. Both sides argued their case, and Powell ended up granting Bolton permission to proceed. In the months since Jones tried to abort Bolton's campaign, he has signed agreements with 81 countries.

"Bolton's best kept as far as possible from foreign officials," says Greg Thielmann, formerly assigned as an intelligence liaison to Bolton (and no fan of his), "but I'll give the devil his due; he's been very effective." Partly, this success derives from the fact that Bolton takes his cues exclusively from the White House. In his book *The Case for Bureaucracy*, Charles Goodsell writes, "The agency positions in which bureaucrats 'sit' have much to do with where they 'stand.'" Nothing could be less true of Bolton, who follows the "James Baker model" of bureaucratic management—like the former secretary of state, whose ties to Bolton date back 25 years, he views himself as the White House emissary at Foggy Bottom rather than the other way around. "John has had the luxury of Powell delegating red-meat issues and deferring to him on subjects where [Bolton] is closely aligned with the White House, which is quite frequently," says Gary Schmitt, executive director of the Project for the New American Century. State Department officials often describe Bolton as President Bush's "alter ego," but Bush's actual ego may be closer to the truth, since Bolton comes closer than anyone at Foggy Bottom to being an authentic expression of White House statecraft. As one mystified career State Department employee puts it, "At first we thought that Powell and Armitage would control Bolton. We kept waiting, and now Bolton seems to be controlling them."

Equally important, while his neoconservative counterparts struggle to transform an ambitious vision into reality, Bolton, when not tearing down in the name of America First, wages a narrowly focused, pragmatic campaign to dot i's and cross t's. "John has a very deep anchor, but let's just say he also has a very long line," says one of Bolton's colleagues, by way of explaining how Bolton's realism extends to operating within the very institutions—and often on behalf of official policies—that he plainly despises. Hence, Bolton, who once said that, if U.N. headquarters in New York "lost ten stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference," has spent the past three years working its corridors—to indisputable effect. Hence, too, Bolton the ideologue invokes Edmund Burke's admonition that the way to discover "what is false theory is by comparing it to practice," and, according to Keith Payne, until recently a deputy assistant secretary of defense in the Bush Pentagon, "He sees the world as it is, without any illusions." This is particularly true of Bolton's approach to nonproliferation issues, which he approaches in decidedly technocratic fashion. "It's easy to operate in a dream world," he tells me, "but the goal is to have an impact and a deterrent effect."

The contrast here is less one of ends than means. When it comes to North Korea, for instance, Pentagon officials have floated solutions ranging from the hopeful (Kim Jong Il's

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regime collapsing under its own totalitarian weight) and the far-fetched (encouraging a military coup) to the apocalyptic (plans for a military strike against the North). Bolton, by contrast, has focused his energies on a less ambitious project that responds to the world simply as it is. That project, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), aims to interdict weapons-related cargo bound to and from rogue states. PSI, in which Bolton has enlisted 15 nations, has resulted in the boarding of several North Korean vessels over the past year. But it netted its biggest haul in October, a shipload of uranium-enrichment centrifuge parts destined for Libya. "The PSI seizure of uranium centrifuge equipment was a major factor in Libya's decision to give up on WMD [weapons of mass destruction]," Bolton claims. At the time, American and British diplomats had been negotiating with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi about his WMD programs for months, "but the [Libyans] only came clean after they got caught," says one intelligence official. Even Bolton skeptics credit the feat. "By staking out a more muscular approach to proliferation threats and raising doubts about the effectiveness of more traditional approaches," says Robert Einhorn, assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation during the Clinton administration, "the Bush administration has, in effect, challenged the Europeans to show that their preferred methods can work." Indeed, while Bolton claims not to "do carrots," in both the Libyan and North Korean cases his "muscular approach," far from prompting a hardening of their positions, helped achieve the opposite result: Pyongyang's agreement to the long-held U.S. demand that it negotiate with America and her allies across the same table and Tripoli's decision to abandon its WMD programs.

In his diplomatic efforts at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Bolton the realist also emerges clearly. Here, too, Pentagon officials have calculated that the surest way to put an end to Teheran's WMD arsenal is to put an end to the regime that presides over it, by rearming Iraq-based Iranian opposition groups or pinning their hopes on the possibility that, as neoconservative writer Michael Ledeen puts it, "the United States could provide the decisive support that would guarantee success of [a] democratic revolution." Yet a democratization policy, however politically and morally necessary, is not a counterproliferation policy—not least because Iran's democrats profess to be as eager to acquire nuclear weapons as its theocrats.

Bolton, by contrast, simply focuses on the weapons themselves. Last September, he fiercely lobbied the IAEA board on Iran's nuclear program, which responded by giving Teheran until October 31, 2003, to explain itself. Sensing trouble ahead, Britain, France, and Germany then persuaded Iran to sign an additional protocol, allowing for surprise inspections. Challenged by Bolton to take a firmer stand, the IAEA board followed up in November with a resolution that threatened to declare Teheran in violation of the nonproliferation treaty "should any further serious Iranian failures come to light." Last month, one clearly did, when IAEA inspectors stumbled across designs for a sophisticated centrifuge. To provide an adequate response to the threat, however, Bolton clearly trusts neither IAEA chief Mohamed El-Baradei nor the United Nations as a whole. Hence, even while he presses the IAEA to act, he has pressured Russia not to supply fuel to Iran's reactors. "There's absolutely no question that Bolton's strategy of pressuring the IAEA led its members to finally get serious about Iran's weapons programs," says Ray Takeyh, an Iran specialist at National Defense University.

THERE IS, TO be sure, something missing here. Despite its thoroughly American pedigree, Bolton's worldview lacks any trace of the American creed—liberalism. Thus, the neoconservative reading of the war in Iraq does not square with Bolton's. The former argued that America's duty would be discharged neither when Saddam Hussein was toppled nor even when Iraq subsequently had a decent government, but only when it became a pivot for democratizing the region. Bolton, by contrast, was arguing months before the war that the United States should oust Saddam and, according to one member of his team, "get the hell out immediately." Bolton's pessimistic reading of the international scene kept him from buying into the neocons' fundamentally liberal assumptions about postwar Iraq and, significantly, distanced him from the controversies that flowed from them.

It has also kept him from grasping the broader significance of the enterprise. "John's far more skeptical than neocons about nation-building and democratization," says Schmitt. That understates the distinction, for Bolton has explicitly repudiated both ideas. "We're not trying to build a platonic international order," Bolton told me. "We're responding to specific threats with a national-interest approach."

His triumph, then, amounts to a triumph of realism, of low expectations. It also says something about the limits of idealism—about neoconservatism, some of whose adherents have gone from being, in Irving Kristol's famous phrase, "liberals mugged by reality" to purists who no longer attempt to fashion a realistic political ideal; and about liberalism, or at least that brand of liberalism that believes U.S. power should be used only in concert with the international community. Finally, Bolton's success represents a failure of the international community itself, which too often stands aside while the United States chases its selfish and narrowly conceived interests but which cries "imperialism" when it does the reverse.

Hence, we're left with Bolton himself, holding up one leg of America's grand strategy, while the rest collapses around him. It's not enough. But, as Jack Nicholson's Colonel Jessep—sounding a lot like John Bolton—put it, "We live in a world that has walls," and "deep down, in places you don't talk about at parties, you want me on that wall." If nowhere else, Bolton belongs on the wall. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Changings

DAVID MAMET IS UNDERappreciated. He writes plays, directs them, writes screenplays, directs them, and sometimes produces them. All this activity is well known, certainly, but by now we have settled into a sort of acceptance of Mamet rather than treating him with adequate regard. Here is a small sampling of his plays: the symbolic *Water Engine*, the expressionist *Edmond*, the realistic *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, plus several valuable renderings of Chekhov works. This quite incomplete list might be ample, we could say, for a person still in his fifties, but then we glance at Mamet's film record.

SPARTAN
(Warner Bros.)

GOOD BYE, LENIN!
(Sony Pictures Classics)

He has written almost thirty films, some of them adapted from his own plays or from novels by others. They, too, range widely: *House of Games*, which he also directed, is a quasi-mystical treatment of gambling; *The Verdict* is arguably the best American film about lawyers and lawyering; *Hoffa* is arguably the best American film about labor struggles; *Wag the Dog* is an acidulous satire on a subject already self-satirical (presidential campaigning); *The Winslow Boy*, which he also directed, is a sleek adaptation of a very English play. Again, this is only a sampling.

This cursory glance at Mamet's career suggests that, in any accounting of our current cultural treasures, we have too often treated him as little more than a steady provider of varied work. He is not just dependable old Mamet. (To make it even more interesting, he is not all that dependable: some of his work has foundered.) He has already evoked some serious critical study: he deserves a good deal more.

What all this leads to is the fact that his new film will surely have two audiences. To those unaware or only vaguely aware of his accomplishments, **SPARTAN**, which he wrote and directed, will seem just one more competent jet-powered political thriller. To Mamet familiars, it will seem the fresh adventure of a probing artist. He has dealt with crime before—*The Spanish Prisoner*, *Homicide*, *Heist*—but here he has taken on a demanding genre: the sort of cold-steel, incessantly kinetic mode of such pictures as *Three Days of the Condor* and *In the Line of Fire*. Mametians may well think, "Good Lord, now he's doing *this*."

The film begins with a young woman fleeing through a forest, pursued by a man. The result is only the first of the surprises. Soon we are in the middle of an arcane, chilling government agency, a group called Rangers, apparently connected with the U.S. Secret Service. They are busy with top-secret jobs, and they do not blink if killing is involved. The main action of the film is the rescue of a young woman, the daughter of a prominent politician; the Rangers are to find her. The trail leads to the Middle East and to a nest of prostitute peddlers.

The leader of the Ranger team tracking the daughter is played by Val Kilmer, solid yet lithe. (Apropos of insufficient recognition: what about Kilmer's Jim Morrison in *The Doors*?) His exploits and expertise stretch credibility, but since one element in this sort of film is to treat credibility like elastic, we very soon snuggle into complicity with the incredible. The story ends a number of corpses later.

Mamet has understood that in this genre, clarity is optional. It is not always easy to understand what is happening, but once a reasonably clever premise is established, the film's prime job is to create clickety-click action. The pace of the picture is a basic reason for its being, and if the fate of a nation—or of the world—hangs in the balance, that's nice, too. This sort of film is like a motion picture set: what we see is what counts, not the carpentry and the vacancy behind it. Mamet's understanding of the essentials here and his skill in supplying them are not major achievements for him, but it would be wasteful not to recognize them. *Spartan* is another feather, though a small one, in his cap.

GOOD BYE, LENIN! gives us a character who is not common in films, or at least not in the ones we see these days—a sympathetic person who is a devout Communist still unshaken in her faith. The place is East Berlin in 1989, shortly before the collapse of the German Democratic Republic. Christiane, a woman with two grown children, is a thorough Communist. She is in poor health, and when she sees her son Alex in a scuffle with police, she has a heart attack that sends her into a coma for many months. While she is unconscious, the Berlin Wall comes down.

Alex, devoted to his mother, is afraid that if she recovers and learns that Communism is finished and Germany is reunified, the shock may be fatal. She does recover, and Alex and his sister do what they can to hide the national change from her. Christiane is still bedridden; her children refurnish her newly decorated bedroom in the former drab way, keep the curtains drawn as much as possible, and instruct friends to maintain the pretense of the GDR when they visit. With the help of a friend, Alex even concocts news clips from the old days that he can play on Christiane's television set. Outside this room East Berlin is awash in change—is ceasing to be East. Not in this room. Of course the charade cannot last: the ending twists.

Daniel Brühl is unaggressively appealing as the loving son, and Katrin Sass is easy and simple as Christiane, who treasures the customs and songs and, in her view, the possibilities of Honecker's domain. The other actors, especially Maria Simon as the daughter, have been astutely cast with a view to the social-cultural nimbus that each could bring along.

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The screenplay by Bernd Lichtenberg and Wolfgang Becker—the latter also directed—is troubled by uncertainty of purpose. If it was meant to be satirical, with a touch of Billy Wilder, then the character of Christiane is out of place. She is not stupid or befuddled: she deeply loves the society she grew up in. If the focus of the film was the growing irrelevance of Christiane's convictions, then the satire fizzles and seriousness takes over. Combination of comedy and gravity is certainly common enough, but it requires a sure hand and perceptible intent. This screenplay has some neat touches, but it never makes up its mind. ■

DAVID HAJDU ON MUSIC
The iPod Blues

IS THE ALBUM DYING, OR IS IT just passing into another plane of existence? Some fifty years after Columbia Records introduced the 33⅓ rpm vinyl LP, and more than twenty years since Philips and Sony initiated its displacement by the longer-playing compact disc, the album's days as the pre-eminent format for serious (and less-than-serious) works of popular music appear to be dwindling. Annual CD sales have been declining (despite the occasional spike for a popular release such as Norah Jones's latest) ever since file-sharing made it possible—if not necessarily legal—for virtually anyone with a computer to download songs for free. To date, the flourishing young Internet technology has denied the record labels an estimated $700 million, according to a report issued in January by Forrester Research, which also forecasts a five-year decline of 30 percent in CD purchases by the end of 2004 and, inevitably, the demise of the CD format some time afterward. "On-demand services are the future of entertainment delivery," predicts the study's author, Josh Bernoff. "CDs, DVDs, and any other forms of physical media will become obsolete."

If this is so, and it is not at all certain that it is, what exactly would be dying—the album as a form of musical art, or merely the way in which it has been disseminated and commodified? As every undergraduate learns from Roland Barthes, the package is not the thing. Innumerable albums in all genres of popular music are readily available for downloading, song by song, through file-sharing at no cost or, increasingly, for fees through record-company-supported websites. From the early twentieth-century infighting over the use of sound recordings on radio through the movie studios' furor over the VCR in the 1980s to the recent lawsuits against audio file-sharers, the entertainment industry has been inclined to protectionist arm-waving in the face of new technologies until it has figured out how to exploit them. Rock-era models of the album form, such as the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, and the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks*, show every sign of enduring as sets of downloadable files, and current-day acts such as OutKast and the Flaming Lips continue to make albums, that is, to fashion cohesive song collections issued on CD as well as in cyberspace.

Still, the Internet is something other than a new kind of flat, round disk. Being interactive and open-ended, it offers listeners a freewheeling new way to obtain, to organize, and to listen to recordings; it is not so much a package as an absence of packaging. I don't know what the semiologists are telling the undergraduates about this, but the matter is not just academic. In fact, the phenomena of sharing files, downloading songs, and custom-burning CDs at home appear to be changing not only the mechanics and the economics of pop-music consumption, but also the nature of the music—and even the nature of the authorship of the recordings that many of today's listeners, particularly young people, are playing.

Each month, more than 160 million downloads of songs transpire through KaZaA, the most popular of numerous Internet-based mechanisms for the free exchange of music files among computer users, "peer to peer." KaZaA's modus operandi is a neat variation on that of Napster, the first successful file-sharing system, which nurtured the taste for free music in twenty-one million registered users before it suffered the consequences and folded up under pressure from the music industry three years ago. (Its founders have since sold the Napster trademark, which has been revived for use on a fee-based downloading service operating with the complicity of the record companies.) Since Napster gathered music files uploaded from subscribers and then offered them to other subscribers for downloading, it was susceptible to charges of trafficking in stolen intellectual property. But KaZaA doesn't touch the goods itself; it merely provides a conduit through which people can pass music files from computer to computer, with no exchange of money. In doing so, KaZaA functions something like a not-for-profit fencing operation. Hence the recording industry has shifted the tactics of its assault on file-sharing to the sharers themselves, suing 531 college students, teenagers, and others in February, one month after having filed 532 identical suits. File-sharers can find little solace in the lawsuits' rate of diminishment.

BENEATH THE TWENTY-FIRST-century gloss of Internet jargon, snarky naming ("Napster"—isn't that what you call the sleepiest guy in the dorm?), and jumbled Internet-age capitalization (like eBay and iPod, KaZaA looks like instant-message shorthand—"Kaput! Zap-atcha!"), there is something old-fashioned about the file-sharing culture's absorption with the individual song. The home page on the Napster website lists the top ten downloads of the day—all songs, not albums—and promotes the service's access to more than five hundred thousand individual tracks of music, citing that fact three times in different spots; the word "album" appears only once on the page, in smallish type. In one sense, then, file-sharing has taken popular music full circle, back to the era before the album—and further, before recordings of any kind, when the song had primacy.

Its short duration of a few minutes' time has helped to make the American popular song popular ever since it rose to prominence in the late nineteenth century, when industrial prosperity brought forth the American middle class, the parlor piano, and the domestic musicales that families staged in emulation of romanticized Old World notions of leisure time well spent. Songs, sold by the millions as sheet music for twenty-five cents

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apiece (the rough equivalent of $5 today), had to be short and easy enough for modestly trained amateurs to play and sing, as well as economical to print. (For young file-sharers now, albums are difficult to download with anything but expensive ultra-fast computing equipment and high-speed Internet connections, while songs are fairly easy to access with typical computer setups.) The song sheet so symbolized the money-making capacity of popular music that, for most of his exceedingly long life, Irving Berlin would permit the tunes in his vast catalog to be published only as individual sheets of music and not in song collections, the publishing equivalent of albums.

The first half-century of recorded music reinforced the pre-eminence of the song, largely because the recording capacity of a standard ten-inch 78 rpm record was only about three minutes, ideal for a popular tune but more than a little problematic for long-form symphonic and operatic works. I still remember spying around my aunt's garage with one of my cousins when we were kids and discovering a megalithic hardbound record binder with a gilded spine, in which one of the Beethoven symphonies had been issued on what seemed like a hundred 78s. My cousin and I used part of the first movement as a Frisbee until we were scolded for corrupting treasured evidence of the family's sophistication. As punishment, my uncle suggested that we be forced to play the records.

Serious musicians in and out of classical music saw the brevity of the single record as constricting. Duke Ellington, foremost among composers associated with the popular milieu in his time, grew fixated on experiments to stretch the song form, accommodate his expansive musical imagination, and challenge the aesthetic classicism that codifies short and long forms as low and high art. He defied the three-minute limit with extended compositions such as "Reminiscing in Tempo," released on four sides of two 78s in 1935. He and his classically oriented collaborator Billy Strayhorn took up the suite form and created multi-part works such as "The Deep South Suite" (1946), which was issued on a pair of 78s in 1947; and they put together collections of songs on multiple records and had them packaged in thick binders that resembled family photo albums. Other jazz artists, situated neatly on the divide between pop and classical music, attempted similar innovations with varying degrees of success, among them musicians as diverse as Louis Armstrong and Stan Kenton.

EVERYONE KNOWS HOW THE long-playing record established a new format for popular music, giving artists (and their producers) more room to explore, whether in compositions of a greater range of lengths or through the creative selection and juxtaposition of songs. Invented by a music-loving engineer named Peter Goldmark, who could no longer abide what records like the ones in my aunt's garage were doing to Beethoven, the LP found its creative identity in pop music, where its function was not passively replicative but stirringly formative. In the classical realm, the most an LP could achieve was to approximate the sound of musicians interpreting a composition; in pop the LP created the album, which became an art form. The LP facilitated a new kind of adventurism in popular music and advanced the idea of collage as a popular aural art.

Those of us who grew up with rock and roll have been conditioned to believe that the Beatles invented the "concept album" and brought thematic integrity to the long-playing record in 1967, when they bestowed *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* upon us. Just a few months ago, *Rolling Stone* proclaimed *Sgt. Pepper* to be the number-one greatest album of all time. (Not the greatest rock album, but the greatest album.) But for all its virtues—its technical innovation, its imagination and charm, its durability, and its enormous influence on musicians from every sphere—*Sgt. Pepper* has never held up as a cohesive whole ("Within You, Without You" doesn't really belong and "Good Morning, Good Morning" is cynical filler), and it was by no means the first album to be conceived and structured as an integrated work.

True, most rock albums in the music's first decade tended to be loosely organized and centered around the hit singles that, in their modishness, evanescence, and suitability either to dancing or making out, dominated the attention of the adolescents who had made up most of the rock audience until the mid-1960s. (There were exceptions, of course—most notably *Pet Sounds*, the record that provoked Paul McCartney to mobilize the Beatles to attempt *Sgt. Pepper.*) Outside rock, however, thematically unified albums were hardly rare from the first days of the LP. Frank Sinatra alone made more than a dozen thoroughly wrought and unified albums, including the dual gems of his mid-1950s prime, *Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely* and *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!* His fans have such regard for the conceptually rigorous albums that Sinatra made at Capitol in the 1950s that the marketers at Reprise, the label that Sinatra founded after leaving Capitol, have attempted to appropriate the earlier records' cachet by emblazoning the re-issues of Sinatra's efforts of the 1960s with stickers mistakenly identifying each as an "Original Concept Album."

THE COMPACT DISC, WHICH HAS from its start traded on the myth of technical permanence, was programmed to enact its own extinction. Designed (as the LP was) with the reproduction of classical performances in mind, the CD can fit any of the Beethoven symphonies on one disc. It has nearly twice the capacity of a long-playing record: seventy-four minutes and forty-two seconds—that is to say, nearly twice as much as it needs for most popular music. As the presence of "Within You, Without You" and "Good Morning, Good Morning" on *Sgt. Pepper* suggests, the best pop artists have had a more than adequate challenge in filling two sides of a vinyl LP. I once asked George Martin, the Beatles' producer, how the lads and he would have addressed the demands of the CD. "We might have taken twice as much time to make each record, I imagine, and driven EMI out of business and one another mad that much sooner," Martin said drolly. "I suspect that we might not have sustained that extraordinary level of quality on every record. How could we be expected to do so?"

Now that we all can record, or "burn," or whatever, our own CDs from the Internet or from our friends' collections, the commercial CD seems viable mainly as the source of ingredients for home cooking. If this is not the record companies' intent, one must wonder why so many new releases include such a wealth of disposable tracks, including songs that are so similar as to be redundant. Why are re-issues of vintage albums filled with outtakes and multiple alternate takes? Where is the pleasure in boxed sets providing the complete recordings of an artist on a given label? All such CDs are ill-suited to traditional listening, straight

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through from beginning to end—but they serve as excellent resources for selecting tracks to record onto personalized compilations. It is only to be expected that blank compact discs for home recording outsell commercial releases today. (Although tape recorders made this sort of thing possible decades ago, the complexity and the expense of the equipment, compounded with the diminished sound quality of home recordings, limited their appeal and their value.)

WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING, then, is not the death of the album, but something more intriguing: a transformation in the nature of its authorship. While professional recording artists are creating all the materials that end up on home-recorded CDs, the art of their assemblage—of selecting, compiling, and editing (or even altering the tracks electronically)—has shifted into the hands of the individual at home. The process is a kind of collaboration not unlike the old one between a Tin Pan Alley sheet-music composer and a parlor-musicale pianist: the first does the primary creative work, the second contributes interpretively. The selection and sequencing of previously existing recordings is copyrightable as a creative work; moreover, digital processing with commonplace software can alter songs radically, as in the case of *The Grey Album*, the bootleg morphing of music from the Beatles' *White Album* with vocal tracks from the rapper Jay-Z, wildly popular as an Internet download.

My daughter and her older brother are seventeen and twenty, and, like many of their friends in high school and college, they have made dozens—in my daughter's case, more than a hundred—of their own compilation albums, most of them recorded onto blank CDs, more and more of the newer ones stored on various miniature digital music gizmos (iPods and the like). This activity has been strictly legal, of course; they pay when they download or record from purchased CDs. In any event, my daughter takes the art of digital assemblage seriously and has some thoughts on the aesthetics of the "mix," which I herewith report:

- It's personal. Are you making it for yourself? Then nobody else has to like it. Record companies have to put in something for everybody, but the personal mix has no social responsibility.
- Mix it up. It is a mix. The music industry is obsessed with categories—hip hop, rock, New Age.... Put different tracks together. They may get along.
- Songs are like people—things happen when you put them together. The space between the tracks is never really empty. When you put songs next to each other, something interesting should occur between them.
- Balance is important. If you have too many songs by any one singer or band, you throw the whole thing off. It becomes more like their thing, and it's not yours anymore. What's the point of that?

All listening is selective, of course. The mind comes pre-programmed to tune out sounds that it finds distracting or undesirable—Muzak in the grocery aisles, commercials on the car radio. The controls on every kind of digital music-playing gadget have for some time allowed us to skip songs on CDs and to re-arrange their sequence as well. Yet the unwanted sound was always there, or close by, and bits of it could still attract us if we let our attention wander at the checkout line or if we neglected to push the fast-forward button in time.

In downloading selectively and programming our own CDs (or iPod mixes), we are, in a new way, usurping the artist's prerogative to surprise, to educate, and even to change us. Haven't we all found music on records that we didn't like or understand at first, but grew to appreciate with repeated listening to the work exactly as the artist intended it? That was the case, for me, with more than half of the songs in Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*; once I heard it a few times, it seemed to become a different, better score. More precisely, the score made me a different, better listener. As a highly efficient new instrument of customization, downloading represents a sizable advance in our ever-growing capacity to re-arrange reality so as to exclude whatever of it fails to give us immediate satisfaction, and it leaves us in peril of finding satisfaction only in our own tastes. ■

Sean Wilentz

The Details of Greatness

American historians versus American founders.

"NEGRO PRESIDENT": JEFFERSON AND THE SLAVE POWER
By Garry Wills
(Houghton Mifflin, 274 pp., $25)

AN IMPERFECT GOD: GEORGE WASHINGTON, HIS SLAVES, AND THE CREATION OF AMERICA
By Henry Wiencek
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 404 pp., $26)

I.

IN 1839, THOMAS MORRIS, A RADICAL Jacksonian senator from Ohio, took aim at John C. Calhoun, the Southern slaveocracy, and their timid Northern appeasers from both national parties, and coined a new phrase. "The slave power of the South and the banking power of the North ... are now uniting to rule the country," Morris told the Senate. Over the next twenty years, Morris's exhortation to fight the "slave power" became the rallying cry for the anti-slavery forces that eventually carried Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. The dissident Democrat Morris, forgotten today, stood tall in the minds of anti-slavery agitators. Salmon Chase, another Jacksonian sympathizer and later a leader of both the Liberty and the Republican parties, credited Morris as the man who "first led me to see the character of the slave power as an aristocracy, and the need of an earnest organization to counteract its pretensions."

So out of the tradition of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Andrew Jackson—it was indeed a unified tradition—came a powerful motto, and an anti-aristocratic politics that would help bring slavery to its knees. Recent historians have caught up with Morris's

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phrase, if not with Morris—but they have used the knowledge perversely, as a club to batter Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and their followers and admirers. According to such scholars as Richard H. Brown, Paul Finkelman, and Leonard L. Richards, the "Slave Power" was born in 1788, with the ratification of the three-fifths clause of the Constitution. Thanks to the clause's artificial inflation of Southern representation in the House of Representatives and the electoral college, these historians assert, the party of slavery, led first by Jefferson and Madison and then by Jackson, was able to keep the country safe for human bondage.

Northern anti-slavery opinion, so the argument goes, either turned its back on party politics or allied itself with Jefferson's, Madison's, and Jackson's opponents, first the Federalists (the political faction, most certainly not to be confused with the earlier Framers of the Constitution) and then the Whigs. But owing to the three-fifths clause, neither the anti-slavery Federalists nor the anti-slavery Whigs could muscle aside the slaveocrats for very long. Not until the 1850s did the demographic and political imbalance shift. Only then did Lincoln and the Republicans—the political heirs of the anti-slavery Federalists, according to the revisionists—finally win national power and trigger Southern secession.

I am simplifying. The provocative writings of Brown, Finkelman, and especially Richards present a more sophisticated account of this muddle. Yet I am not simplifying when I so describe Garry Wills's appropriation and amplification of those historians' work in his misadventurous new book. The good news is that there is also a new example of how to get the problem of slavery, democracy, and the American founding right: nothing could be more different from Wills's book in its argument, its spirit, and its soundness than Henry Wiencek's rich study of George Washington and his slaves.

II.

THE IMPUTATION OF SENATOR Morris's "slave power" argument to the nation's very beginnings marks the convergence of several scholarly trends, some of them admirable. Having long slighted slavery's importance in the early republic, historians were overdue for a reckoning on the subject. At the nation's founding, approximately one-fifth of the population was enslaved. Slavery still existed in New York and New Jersey, and the last slave would not be freed there until, respectively, 1827 and 1846. Northerners participated in and profited from the slave trade, as well as from the Southern plantation economy. In every part of the country, non-slaveholders and slaveholders alike were implicated in the system. Four of the first five presidents, all of them Virginians, owned slaves.

National politics turned chiefly on matters of government finance, foreign policy, and civil liberties for freemen, but hardly a year passed without some conflict over slavery and its future. In 1798 and again in 1804, Congress debated whether to allow slavery to expand into the new Western territories. There were debates about closing the transatlantic slave trade (which was accomplished in 1808), about whether to accept and to discuss anti-slavery petitions from Quakers and Northern free blacks, about whether to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Foreign policy became entangled with slavery after the Haitian slave rebellion of 1791 that toppled the French colony of Saint Domingue. Thus the congressional battle that was joined in the Missouri crisis in 1819, and which quickly raised the specter of disunion, had been thirty years in preparation.

The re-discovery of these conflicts—and of the victory, in almost every instance, of slaveholding interests—has cast shadows on the era's political leadership, and above all on its greatest leader, the slaveholding democrat Thomas Jefferson. Beginning in the 1960s, powerful studies by Winthrop D. Jordan and David Brion Davis deposed the accepted view of Jefferson as an anti-slavery man. Scholars re-discovered the paradoxical and hair-raising sections of Jefferson's anti-slavery work *Notes on the State of Virginia*, written in the early 1780s, in which he speculated freely on the biological inferiority of blacks, likening them at one point to orangutans. Beyond his youthful anti-slavery ventures, Jefferson's later reticence on the subject, his willingness to go along with and even to encourage slavery's expansion, his coldness to the Haitian rebels, and most of all his own slaveholding (including his untroubled buying and selling of human beings) all made him appear at best two-faced about freedom and democracy, and at worst a sinister instrument of the nation's disgrace.

The more historians examined Jefferson and slavery in the early republic, the more sordid and brutal the era's politics looked—and the more distorted their own vision became. Instead of reconsidering slavery as an important and neglected issue, they began to regard it as the only issue that mattered. In the final chapter to his distinguished book *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Edmund S. Morgan wrote as if all of early America were Virginia, and suggested that at its inception American egalitarianism existed firmly on a foundation of slavery and racial oppression.

Other writers focused their blame on Jefferson and the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans, while finding new virtues in the Federalists. Among the more outspoken early anti-slavery whites had been such pillars of Federalist politics as Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. Many of the later abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison, had political roots in New England Federalism. But the Democratic-Republicans were strongest in the South and were led by the slaveholders Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, charlatans all. The origins of the anti-slavery movement—and of modern racial liberalism—lay not, as has long been supposed, in Jeffersonianism, but rather in Federalism, long abused as the politics of anti-democratic reaction.

MOST RECENTLY, THIS REVISIONISM has circled back to Jefferson himself, and provoked one of the most ferocious assaults ever launched on a great American. The fallout from the Sally Hemings controversy is the least of it. On the basis, largely, of one overheated letter that Jefferson wrote about the French Revolution in 1793, Conor Cruise O'Brien has denounced him as a forerunner of Pol Pot. On the basis, largely, of a crabby letter that the eternally crabby eighty-eight-year-old John Adams wrote in 1823, Pauline Maier has stripped Jefferson of his authorship of the Declaration of Independence. Another writer has compared him unfavorably to Adams, the doughty conservative signer of the Alien and Sedition acts, and still another has called Jefferson the foremost American racist of his time.

The worse things have gone for Thomas Jefferson, the better they have gone for the Federalists, those supposedly intrepid foes of the three-fifths clause and Southern slavery. History, like politics, can be a zero-sum game; and so the trashing of Jefferson has been accompa-

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nied by a full-scale Federalist revival. The same has proved true for the succeeding period in our history, in which the pro-Jefferson slaveholder Andrew Jackson gets cast as a villain and his Whig opponents as comparative paragons of racial enlightenment. The reversal in reputation yields a seductive new paradox: that in the matters of slavery and race, the hierarchical conservatives were the true egalitarians, and the democrats were frauds.

Perhaps liberal sentimentalism was due for a qualification; but this revisionist history has come to recapitulate, down to the last petty detail, the wildest of partisan Federalist polemics. And down to the last detail this history is warped, willful, and wrong. Jefferson certainly wrote the Declaration of Independence, even if, as he always conceded, he had help. The American political leader of the era who delivered the most outspoken defense of slavery and white supremacy was not Jefferson but a puffed-up South Carolina Federalist named William Loughton Smith. Most Yankee Federalists, in and out of politics, could be counted on to side with the most obstreperous slaveholders until it became politically inconvenient to do so. The Federalists' attacks on the three-fifths clause arose from their hysteria over the spread of democratic politics in the North, not from some imaginary Federalist abolitionism. In any event, the South's inflated power under the three-fifths clause was irrelevant to the most important congressional slavery debates of the time, up to and including the Missouri crisis of 1819–1821, when anti-slavery proposals were thwarted by the Senate (where the three-fifths clause had no effect) and not by the House of Representatives.

Although some Northern Federalists took principled stands against slavery, so did Northern Republicans; in fact, after 1800 there was a growing core of Northern anti-slavery Jeffersonians in Congress that became the predominant anti-slavery political force by the time of the Missouri crisis. Jefferson himself was far more ambiguous, and in his old age, when the chips were down, he backed the spread of slavery into the West. But he believed that this diffusion would hasten slavery's demise, not make it stronger. He may have been deluding himself; but he was emphatically not in favor of slavery, as so many of his Federalist foes were.

What, exactly, is stoking the contemporary rage against Jefferson? An anachronistic political correctness, certainly, in which the early twenty-first-century personal is the early nineteenth-century political; and an ideological disquietude about the greatest articulator of American democracy, the burden of whose principles might be lifted off certain shoulders if he could be shown to have been a mountebank. Jefferson embodies the Enlightenment, which infuriates both the religious right and the postmodernist left. Trashing Jefferson is also a sure path to attention and fame. Until now, partisans from across the American political spectrum sought to use Jefferson for their own purposes. Today it is fashionable on the left and on the right to debase Jefferson, and score contemporary political points, and pray for the best-seller lists. Historians are always out to show that great figures had feet of clay, and to find merit in what previous historians have discarded; but the passion behind this particular onslaught exceeds the normal re-adjustments of historical reputations.

At the most recent meeting of the American Historical Association, for example, an audience of academics roared its approval when Joseph Ellis pronounced Jefferson "the deadest white male in American history." The assault has reached the point where anyone who speaks up on behalf of Jefferson and his party, or who calls into question the detractors' arguments, can expect to be labeled (or rather libeled) by Garry Wills and others as a defender of slavery. That the charges come not simply from demagogues, journalists, and neo-Federalist apologists but from reputable writers and scholars indicates that some larger cultural distemper is at work. But whatever the reason, caricature and diatribe have begun to displace history in studies of the early republic—which makes Henry Wiencek's subtle book about the first slaveholder president so refreshing.

III.

GEORGE WASHINGTON IS AT once the most familiar and the most distant figure in early American history. His name and his image are everywhere. He is still remembered as the father of his country, but he remains as he was to most of his contemporaries: so Olympian, so lacking in foibles or other human qualities, that he seems to have been carved out of marble. Apart from his Farewell Address, delivered when he left the presidency in 1796 and composed chiefly by Alexander Hamilton, Washington left behind no memorable piece of writing. (The deeply insecure John Adams called him "too illiterate, unread, unlearned for his station.") The best-known story about him, that as a boy he told his father the truth about cutting down a cherry tree, is a myth. His plantation home at Mount Vernon stands chiefly as a shrine to his augustness. His famous wooden dentures, one set lovingly preserved at the National Museum of Dentistry in Baltimore, serve as lonely testimony to his humanity—and even they turn out to be constructed mostly out of ivory.

But historians have known better. Plenty of what Wiencek discovers about Washington—his inner struggles for self-mastery and order, his neoclassical stoicism (one part Seneca, one part Joseph Addison), his mighty ambition for wealth and fame—has been explored by earlier biographers. Wiencek has a gift for elucidating Washington's personality and inner life in crisp, unpretentious prose. He tells his readers how he conducted his research, turning his story into an engaging tale of scholarly discovery. His fresh and direct approach breathes new life into even the most hackneyed material. (Young George *did* refuse to tell a lie, but the incident involved a horse, not a cherry tree.) Still, as Wiencek admits, scholars have studied the historical record on Washington so closely that most of the mysteries are likely to remain mysterious.

EXCEPT THAT THERE TURNS OUT to be a great deal more to learn about Washington and slavery, and especially about his life as a slaveholder. Everybody knows that Washington owned slaves, and also that, unlike Jefferson, Madison, and the vast majority of Southern masters, Washington provided for the manumission of all his slaves after his wife's death. But what kind of a master was he? Who were his slaves, how did he treat them, and how did they treat him? When did Washington's conscience begin to bother him, and why? What made Washington different from other Southern Revolutionary leaders—including those, like Jefferson, who professed to hate slavery but freed no more than a few of their slaves?

To answer these questions, Wiencek pored over some of the driest sources, including Washington's accounts books, and found fascinating nuggets that others

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had overlooked. He also expanded the Washington archive by taking seriously the bits and pieces of lore that have been handed down through the generations of families descended from Washington's slaves. From his work on his fine earlier book, *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White*, as well as from the Jefferson-Hemings controversy, Wiencek had concluded that these kinds of informal oral histories should never be dismissed as the apocrypha of uppity blacks who yearned to possess their own special piece of American history, which is more or less how earlier historians had treated such sources. Instead, these family stories had to be checked and double-checked for accuracy against the rest of the record. Wiencek found that to a large degree the stories had merit. And so he collected the recorded stories and searched out new ones; and by the time he had assembled them alongside the more conventional sources, and had compared notes with Washington family members, National Park Service Rangers, and other Washington historians and buffs—and, along the way, had done a little literal digging on the grounds of Mount Vernon—he had the makings of a frightening and inspiring biography of Washington unlike any written before.

THE FRIGHTENING PART OF THE story is that before the Revolution Washington does not appear to have been an especially cruel or callous slaveholder. His cruelty and his callousness were perfectly normal for a Virginia planter—which makes the system of slavery seem all the more atrocious in retrospect. Washington became a major slaveholder upon his fortunate marriage to the widow Martha Dandridge Custis in 1759; at his death, forty years later, he owned 164 slaves and controlled another 139 "dower slaves" through his wife. An enthusiastic farmer and improver, he kept up with the latest trends, switching over from tobacco to wheat when the tobacco market became glutted. He adopted scientific methods for planting and farm management. Despite his assiduity, he chronically fell in arrears to his creditors, as was common among Virginia planters. (After the Revolution, Washington was one of the commonwealth's largest debtors.) Yet his debts did not keep him from going further into debt by purchasing all the appurtenances of a great magnate, including a handsome coach.

For his slaves, Washington's combination of orderliness and the pursuit of material happiness had the unfortunate result of making him a particularly watchful master, who took a personal hand in making sure that his property was working efficiently, and who was unafraid to punish slackers or malcontents by selling them off or ordering his overseers to pick up the whip. While Washington lived well beyond his means, he skimped on furnishing his slaves adequate clothing and shelter. His sincere expressions of benevolence—"It is foremost in my thoughts," he wrote, as president, to his Mount Vernon manager, "to desire that you will be particularly attentive to my Negroes in their sickness"—were connected to his anxieties about his bottom line.

While Wiencek chronicles the mundane oppression of slavery on Washington's plantation, a few spectacular episodes leave the deepest impression. Mount Vernon, no less than any other great slave estate, contained its twisted stories of sex across the line. Washington lived alongside a slave named Ann Dandridge, who was his wife's half-sister. Wiencek finds nothing to substantiate the lore that Washington himself sired a child with a slave, but he makes a strong argument that Martha's son (and George's adoptive son) Jacky Custis did so with Ann Dandridge, which made it a case of incest.

The more Wiencek probes, the more the odious strangeness piles up. When Washington was owed debts and the debtor was broke, Washington would breezily raffle off the debtor's slaves, boys and girls as well as their parents, to get his cash. Any of Washington's slaves who dared to run away could expect to be thrown into heavy irons and summarily sold to the killing sugarcane fields of Barbados. Parts of the dentures that famously humanize Washington were made not of ivory but of actual teeth extracted from the mouths of his slaves, whom, it should be said, he had the decency to pay for their trouble. (In 1784, Washington seems to have attempted to end his dental problems once and for all by having slaves' teeth transplanted into his jaw, but the operation failed.)

The true horror of these stories is that they were not at all unusual. This was how the great planters lived. The godlike Washington—who as late as a year before his death called slavery "neither a crime nor an absurdity"—was no exception for most of his life. Wiencek's repugnant scenes testify not to Washington's depravity, but to how different his assumptions (and those of eighteenth-century Virginia) were from our own. No more, no less. And the difference is a strong reminder that there is such a thing as moral progress.

THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT Washington, and a minority of his fellow Virginia planters, is that they changed their minds. Washington's re-thinking did not involve, as Wiencek had first suspected, a deathbed conversion by an old man trembling over the fate of his immortal soul. It was a long and tortured process begun during the Revolution, when Washington suddenly found himself in command of a patriot army that included a substantial number of black troops. By the middle of the war, somewhere between 6 percent and 18 percent of the Continental Army consisted of men of African descent. At war's end, the figure rose even higher. Black soldiers fought valiantly and effectively, turning the tide at crucial engagements such as the Battle of the Cowpens; they suffered with the rest of Washington's troops at Valley Forge; and by 1781, when the Americans won the final decisive battle at Yorktown, the black presence in the army was so common—one-quarter of the total—that it raised little comment.

Washington's leadership of the Negro soldiers was his first lesson that blacks were fully human, every bit as capable (and often more so) than whites. He encouraged the recruitment of more black troops when white enlistments began to lag. When the black poet Phillis Wheatley sent him some verses written in his honor, the general replied with a friendly and respectful invitation to meet him at his headquarters. (Jefferson would soon dismiss Wheatley and her poetry as "below the dignity of criticism," citing her work as further proof of black inferiority.) Washington's closest comrade during the Revolution was the Marquis de Lafayette, a staunch anti-slavery advocate who once remarked that he never would have picked up his sword on behalf of American liberty if he thought it would lead to slavery's expansion. Slowly, slowly, the political principles of the Revolution also undermined Washington's preconceptions and self-justifications.

By 1796, the final year of his presidency, Washington was seriously considering

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a plan to emancipate his slaves. Three years later, shortly before his death, he prepared a will specifying that all of his slaves should be immediately freed upon the decease of his wife. The will further specified in great detail how this should be done, with instructions about how the children should be given education and training so that they could support themselves in freedom. Those provisions overturned all of Washington's old excuses about how slavery was too well entrenched to be eradicated suddenly. They reflected his new view—delivered in the same little speech in 1798 in which he said that slavery was neither criminal nor absurd—that slavery had to be abolished not just "on the score of human dignity," but because only "the rooting out of slavery can perpetuate the existence of our union, by consolidating it in a common bond of principle."

WIENCEK MEANS TO LEAVE his readers impressed with Washington as, in his title, "an imperfect god," a flawed giant capable of honest reflection and self-reform, a great American whose ability to understand that he had been wrong only enhanced his greatness. At a time when caricature has driven out nuance in historical studies, especially of "dead white males," such an assessment could not be more welcome. And yet it would be a shame if readers now come to regard Washington as a lonely, racially enlightened superhero of the revolutionary South, pitted against other white planters in general and Thomas Jefferson in particular. After the Revolution, there was a brief wave of manumissions by Virginia planters, some of them motivated by egalitarian ideals. Washington may have been unusual, but he was not singular. More important, as Wiencek himself discusses, Washington's conversion to anti-slavery had sharp limits, especially in the realm of politics.

As president of the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787, Washington raised no objection to the concessions on slavery made to the Deep South as the price for its joining the Union, including the three-fifths clause and the twenty-year delay in considering the closing of the transatlantic slave trade. On the contrary, Washington's numerous statements about how creating the Union superseded every other political question placed his stamp of approval on the compromises. In 1790, James Madison and various Northern congressmen argued that Congress ought to consider petitions, including one endorsed by Benjamin Franklin, favoring gradual emancipation, and inquire into Congress's powers to regulate slavery and the slave trade. Washington, now president of the United States, kept his silence in public on the matter, and in private called the effort "an ill-judged piece of business" and "a great waste of time." (Relying on the writings of the pro-Federalist historian Ellis, Wiencek ignores Madison's exertions on behalf of acting upon the petitions and slights the ambiguities of Madison's subsequent alarmed change of heart, thereby minimizing the grievousness of Washington's reticence.) Washington's struggle with slavery occurred, Wiencek writes, "in private, in secret, among families." In politics, he kept his own counsel.

Wiencek calls Washington's private initiatives his "most important" actions, but that begs a larger question. So long as he held political power, and even into his retirement, Washington never made the slightest public utterance against slavery. His entire public record, on the contrary, bowed to the demands of the most determined pro-slavery forces—more reflexively than Madison and most of the emerging Virginia Jeffersonians. (On considering the anti-slavery petitions in 1790, the Virginia House delegation, disregarding the furious objections of the Deep South slaveholders, broke eight to two in favor.) Given his immense prestige, it would have made an enormous political difference had Washington squared his public stance with his private conversion. But he chose to let the contradiction stand, viewing the odds for a political solution to the slavery issue, Wiencek notes, as "hopeless." Not coincidentally, his silence also helped sustain his Federalist party's comity over the slavery issue—a comity that, like the Union, was bought by truckling to its most powerful pro-slavery members and supporters.

A comparison with Jefferson is illuminating. Unlike Jefferson, Washington arranged to free his slaves after his wife's death. Unlike Jefferson, Washington had no Sally Hemings in his life, though he tolerated Jacky Custis. Yet in politics, Washington appears to have adopted the same circumspection about slavery as the later Jefferson did. He was more timid over the issue than Madison and many of Jefferson's other close political associates. As a young man Jefferson did take public anti-slavery stances, which is more than Washington ever did. Above all, Jefferson propounded throughout his life an egalitarian politics that Washington eschewed. From one angle, therefore, Jefferson looks like a hypocrite. But from another angle the comparison looks very different. Who, finally, is more admirable: a political leader who was against slavery early in his career, consistently expressed egalitarian ideals, but then fell short of those ideals by trimming his sails over the issue in politics and failing to free his slaves; or a political leader who never professed egalitarian ideals, kept his new anti-slavery opinions confined to his private correspondence, and then finally, but only at his death, arranged to free his slaves?

From the standpoint of the slaves of Mount Vernon and Monticello, the advantage clearly belonged to Washington. But for the nation at large it is not so clear. As far as I know, not a single leader in the later fight against slavery, and then against segregation, looked to George Washington for political validation. Yet generations of racial liberals and radicals—from the free black insurrectionist David Walker (who despised Jefferson's racial views but not his writings about equality) to Frederick Douglass, the Free Soilers, Abraham Lincoln, and on to Martin Luther King Jr.—cited Jefferson's democratic creed regularly as the summation of those self-evident truths that made slavery and segregation America's foremost lies. Washington certainly deserves the belated credit that Wiencek claims for him. But sometimes a public hypocrite can have a far more auspicious influence on history than a private convert. It is one of many points about our past that the current bashers of Thomas Jefferson, most notably Garry Wills, refuse to understand.

IV.

IN HIS WRITINGS ON POLITICS AND history, Garry Wills is rather reminiscent of Edmund Wilson. This is not entirely a compliment. Like Wilson, Wills writes prodigiously; there is barely a subject, from St. Augustine to John Wayne, from Venice to Gettysburg, that he cannot "work up," as Wilson used to say. The energy and the erudition are remarkable, but they offer no more of a guarantee of intellectual rigor or historical reliability than was the case in Wilson's work. Get Wilson off on some enthusiasm or some bit of crankiness, and

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he could easily lose his way. Sometimes Wilson combined genuine mental force with wild speculation, most notoriously in *Patriotic Gore*, a wondrous book on the literature of the Civil War that he topped off with a crackpot pro-Confederate introduction. The same treacherous unevenness is evident in Wills's productions.

Wills takes the title of his new book from a letter written by its hero, Timothy Pickering, the High Federalist from Massachusetts and Jefferson's great antagonist. Cast by Wills as a principled anti-slavery fighter—indeed, as an "abolitionist"—Pickering supposedly invented the term "Negro president," in Wills's telling, to refer to the infernal extra representation that the Constitution gave to the South, which permitted the slaveholders to strengthen and to expand their evil.

Here is the full story. In 1804, Pickering was in a panic over the gains being made by pro-Jefferson Republicans in Federalist New England, including in his home state. He had good reason to fret: Jefferson would carry Massachusetts in his landslide re-election campaign later that year, and in 1806 the Jeffersonians would gain control of the Massachusetts legislature. And so Pickering tried to organize a conspiracy to get New England, and if possible New York and New Jersey, to secede from the Union. He explained to his would-be recruits the grounds for separation: Jefferson had given no patronage to Federalists, and he and his supporters had tried to debase morals and religion (not least, as his friends knew, in the Congregationalist theocracy of Connecticut), and above all they had tried to make government more democratic, thereby ending, as Pickering wrote, "the protection of the *best*." Curbing democracy and preserving Federalism—with not a word about slavery—was reason enough to dissolve the Union.

On March 4, Pickering sought to enlist the moderate Federalist Rufus King in his plot. "I am disgusted with the men who now rule," he began, and especially with "the cowardly wretch at their head," who, "like a Parisian revolutionary," enjoyed "prating about humanity" while actually endeavoring to destroy "integrity and worth" and install "Jacobinism." On and on Pickering went about the inferior Jacobins whom Jefferson was appointing to office—including one Virginian, Pickering observed in revulsion, "who could not now get credit in Richmond for a suit of clothes!" Nothing at all about slavery or its cruelties turned up—except (in what had become a familiar excuse among Federalists for their national political failures) how the three-fifths clause aided the Jacobins. "Without a separation," Pickering wrote, "can those states ever rid themselves of negro Presidents and negro Congresses, and regain their just weight in the political balance?"

King saw the conspiracy for what it was and strongly disapproved, as did Alexander Hamilton. John Quincy Adams, still a Federalist, also took deep exception to Pickering's maneuvering, noting the "party grounds" on which the plot was founded—"the victory of professed democracy over Federalism," which Adams, taking the Federalist line, said had been enabled by the triumph of "the slave representation over the purely free." So it is important to recognize that Wills's title comes not at all from some lofty abolitionist tract, but from a bit of ultra-Federalist, anti-democratic secessionist propaganda that even staunch Federalists considered harebrained and ludicrous.

HOW DID WILLS COME TO such an unfortunate pass? His main argument is the old Federalist canard that the three-fifths clause was the only reason that Thomas Jefferson was elected president and that the Democratic-Republicans won control of Congress. With that control, the Democratic-Republicans, led by slaveholders and with their national interests inextricably bound up with slavery, created legislation to shore up human bondage and to permit its expansion. "On crucial matters," Wills writes, "the federal ratio gave the South a voting majority." That influence lasted long after Jefferson left office—preventing, according to Wills, the exclusion of slavery from Missouri and in the late 1840s dooming the Wilmot Proviso that would have banned slavery in territories won from Mexico. The chief political beneficiaries were Jefferson, his party, and their successors, who were opposed prophetically but unsuccessfully by Federalists like the unsung hero Timothy Pickering.

There are many howlers in this argument. It is hard to know where to begin. The three-fifths clause certainly did not prevent the exclusion of slavery from Missouri in 1819, for the simple reason that the House passed the anti-slavery resolutions proposed by the Republican James Tallmadge, only to have the bill rejected by the Senate, where the three-fifths clause made no difference at all. The same was true of the Wilmot Proviso, which passed the House on numerous occasions. So the House was not as rigged for slavery as Wills thinks. He also confidently reports as an outrageous fact the Federalist claim (which many professional historians have fallen for as well) that the Federalists remained the majority party in 1800 and that except for the three-fifths rule John Adams would have defeated Jefferson. Based on a quick look at the numbers, this would appear to be true. But Wills, like others, slights the Federalists' partisan shenanigans in heavily Jeffersonian Pennsylvania, which led to Adams getting as many as seven more electoral votes, and Jefferson getting seven less, than they respectively deserved. (Jefferson swept Pennsylvania in 1796 and 1804, as did every other Democratic-Republican presidential hopeful through 1816, and in 1800, Democratic-Republicans swept the state's congressional elections.) Without the pro-Adams manipulation, and without the three-fifths rule, Jefferson still would have defeated Adams by anywhere from six to ten electoral votes. Without the three-fifths rule but with the chicanery, the Jeffersonians could have charged that the Federalists had stolen the election, and they would have been correct.

GIVEN THE SENATE'S ROLE in deciding so many vital matters concerning slavery, Wills's preoccupation with the "federal ratio" is badly skewed. Then, as now, each state had equal representation in the Senate, which, unlike now, was elected by the state legislatures and not directly by the voters, making it in many respects the less democratic house of Congress. For most of Jefferson's presidency, the North enjoyed a majority in the Senate. In 1804, the year Timothy Pickering plotted Yankee secession, the Northern states held an eighteen-to-sixteen edge; in 1812, midway through Madison's presidency, the balance became equal, but in 1816, after Indiana's admission as a state, the North regained a two-seat advantage for two of the next three years. Wills is confused: on many "crucial matters," for the entire period under discussion, either the North enjoyed the "voting majority" in the deciding chamber, the Senate, or the chamber was evenly divided. And even so, the Senate repeatedly backed slavery and its expansion.

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Wills distorts the early political history of slavery in order to make Jefferson look as bad as possible and his foes look as good as possible. He notes, correctly, that Jefferson cast a cold eye on the Haitian revolutionaries, but he fails to mention that most Federalists, Northerners and Southerners, tried to exploit the revolution by blaming it on the spread of Jefferson's political principles. He notes, again correctly, that slavery was more of an issue in national debates than some pro-Jefferson historians have been willing to allow, but he gets the politics, and the importance of the three-fifths clause in Congress, almost completely wrong. The approval of the Louisiana Purchase—an essentially pro-slavery move, in Wills's eyes, which is a view that Rufus King, Alexander Hamilton, and John Quincy Adams knew better than to endorse—was yet another matter determined by the Senate, not the House. In 1798, a New England Federalist in the House proposed an amendment to ban the spread of slavery into Mississippi Territory, and only two members, both Republicans (including Albert Gallatin, Jefferson's future secretary of the treasury), spoke on the amendment's behalf. In joining the vast House majority against the bill, the Federalist stalwart Harrison Gray Otis, Timothy Pickering's friend and ally, declared haughtily that he "would not interfere with the Southern states as to the species of property in question," and that "he really wished that the gentlemen who held slaves might not be deprived of the means of keeping them in order."

The most important congressional vote about slavery during Jefferson's presidency, apart from the vote on shutting down the transatlantic slave trade, came in 1804, on the so-called Hillhouse amendments. Proposed by the Federalist James Hillhouse, a senator from Connecticut, the amendments would have banned slavery in Louisiana Territory, but they failed to win passage. Once again, though, the crucial vote involved the Senate, not the House; *pace* Wills, the three-fifths clause was irrelevant. And the record on the vote is highly revealing. Although Hillhouse was a Federalist, the bulk of his support came from Northern Jeffersonians. The northern Federalists, meanwhile, split right down the middle, with the pro-slavery position getting the backing of, among others, Wills's hero Pickering! (Wills has Pickering voting for the amendment banning slavery, which is another howler.)

WHERE WILLS CANNOT KEEP his facts straight, he loads the historical dice. Unable to let go of the election of 1800, he argues that Aaron Burr—who, through a fluke, got the same number of electoral votes as Jefferson, thus throwing the outcome into the House of Representatives—was an upright if slightly dazed statesman compared with Jefferson. "Technically," Wills asserts, Burr was entitled to every vote he received, and his behavior was beyond reproach. (Wills makes Jefferson out to be a miserable politician during the House negotiations, by misreading some Federalist sources that turn out to be innocuous testimony to Jefferson's political skills and the Federalists' self-deceptions.) Wills completely ignores that everybody, including Burr, knew that Burr was really running for the vice presidency, and that one Burr elector was supposed to cast his vote for the New Yorker George Clinton instead of for Burr, thereby assuring Jefferson's election. In the confusion of South Carolina's legislative caucus, this failed to happen. Had Burr acted honorably, he would have called the mistake what it was, taken himself out of the race, and headed off a constitutional crisis. Instead he stuck it out, deceptively pledging his fealty to Jefferson while some Federalists plotted to find a way to make Burr the president instead of the "Parisian revolutionary" Jefferson.

Wills does make some interesting points about Timothy Pickering's openness to the Haitian revolutionaries during his tenure as John Adams's secretary of state. Wills may also be correct that Pickering's dislike of slavery was far greater and more consistent than that of Otis and other Massachusetts Federalists. Yet Wills lays aside Pickering's increasingly bitter ravings against democracy; and he also inflates Pickering's anti-slavery commitments, apart from his sorry schismatic efforts to enhance Federalist political prospects after 1800. Pickering certainly hated slavery and called it, in private, an "evil"—but Wills provides barely a handful of public statements by Pickering attacking slavery or upholding the human rights of the slaves. The one statement that Wills does cite at length comes from Pickering's early career, when, in calling for a halt to slavery's spread, he also remarked that "the continuance of slaves" in existing slave states "may be pardonable because unavoidable without hazarding greater evils"—not exactly what one expects from an "abolitionist."

Wills's claims look all the sillier today, given that the historian James M. Banner Jr. destroyed them in his indispensable study of Massachusetts Federalism, which appeared in 1970. Banner overlooked how anti-slavery politics flowed into Northern Republicanism as well as Federalism after the Revolution, but he decisively laid to rest any case to be made on behalf of Pickering's and the Federalists' "abolitionism." (Wills does not seem to have read Banner.) Before 1800, Banner explained, some prominent older Federalists of Pickering's generation, including Theodore Sedgwick and George Thacher, were outspoken opponents of

The Guest

She let him in, who knows what kind of god;
She knew how others hesitated
When he was at their door, the terrible wind

Pushing the latch, and how all this might be
Reckoned at the end. She should have
Known better about the difficult night

Filled with questions, silence as she stirred
What she could into the soup, hardly looking
Up, while a bird at the window watched, while the cow

Called from the barn and the overcoat
He never took off became as dark as
The back of the room, as the hours worked

Along the table. But, after entering,
He did not change her life; her fingers
Like rope that brings up water from the well

Could not let go of each side of her bowl
As she leaned in to hear, to become
Closer to the place where she might ask.

SOPHIE CABOT BLACK

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both slavery and the slave trade. Yet even then, Banner showed, the anti-slavery streak in Federalism was "cautious and restrained," and thereafter it occupied "a marginal position in the Federalist ideology." The assaults upon the three-fifths clause were designed to win "not the abolition of slavery but the abolition of Negro representation." Southern manumission, as Banner explained, would only have increased Southern representation and further diminished Yankee Federalist influence, exactly the opposite of what Pickering wanted: "Freed, it appeared, the Negro was more of a political threat than enslaved."

In his fury at Thomas Jefferson, Wills fabricates a Timothy Pickering who never existed. Although he claims no special fondness for the man—"I suspect I would have found his company irksome," he writes—he is puzzled by the unflattering portraits of his champion that were painted by previous historians. But there is no puzzle here. Outside of his cramped little circle of ultra-Federalist cronies, contemporaries universally regarded Pickering as a conniving, vindictive, partisan ideologue, a loathsome, simpleminded mediocrity whose chief political purpose after 1801 was to thwart democracy and to embarrass Jefferson by any means possible, including secession. The moderate New England Federalist William Plumer was an anti-slavery advocate with no personal or political ax to grind; and he did find Pickering "honest." (Wills quotes Plumer on various subjects, always approvingly.) Yet Plumer also found Pickering's manners so "disgusting," and his public vituperations so "personal & very gross," that he broke off all but the most formal relations with the man. "[Pickering's] passions often produce as fatal consequences to society as the wickedness of other men," Plumer wrote. Those passions, as reported by Plumer, had nothing to do with slavery or anti-slavery.

It is true—and it is a point that Wills, like a few others before him, belabors—that the young William Lloyd Garrison admired Pickering for opposing both the expansion of slavery into Missouri and the colonization of free blacks in the early 1820s. But Garrison was still something of a Federalist hack in those days, and not at all the abolitionist that he would become when his ideas on slavery and race would finally outstrip anything that Pickering contemplated. For his own part, Pickering seems never to have made a significant contribution to any anti-slavery organization—except, late in life, to the American Colonization Society, which he himself came to realize was as racist as it was anti-slavery, and which he turned against.

And what, finally, of the object of Wills's ire, Thomas Jefferson? Wills flails away, but he hits practically nothing that even Jefferson's admirers among the historians have failed to concede about his record on slavery after the Revolution. In his private correspondence, Jefferson continued to express his belief that slavery's days were numbered, and that "interest is really going over to the side of morality," but he swore a vow of public silence on the subject. In part, his silence was politically expedient. Not only would attacks on slavery endanger both his party and the Union; but he had learned from hard personal experience in his younger days that anti-slavery sentiments could be politically disastrous in Virginia. Yet his circumspection was not purely self-protective and self-serving. He appears to have become genuinely pessimistic about the prospects of free blacks and whites living together in harmony. The long chain of abuses that was slavery, he feared, had so hardened the color line that nothing short of "diffusion" (that is, spreading slavery out far and wide) or colonization would solve the problem.

We may be permitted, in our own enlightenment and our own hindsight, to lament the lapses in Jefferson's idealism. Yet Wills, who does not just lament Jefferson's lapses but also excoriates him for them, cannot admit that there was a realistic core to Jefferson's gloominess—a realism that must not be dismissed as hateful racism. Wiencek understands this. As early as when he wrote *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson forecast that "deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites" and "ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained" would always preclude racial peace. Wiencek remarks that "Jefferson was wrong about the blacks, whose history since Emancipation has consistently been one of forgiveness, not revenge. Yet Jefferson was correct about the 'deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites,' as evidenced by subsequent events during Reconstruction and into the twentieth century." He might have added the twenty-first century as well.

Wills cannot consider that Jefferson's realistic assessment, however ugly and hateful to admit, did have a point. Worse, he cannot give Jefferson credit for his greatest act of humane egalitarianism during his presidency: his firm support for the closing of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, which was the earliest possible date under the Constitution. Revisionist interpretations hold that Jefferson and other Virginians supported shutting down the trade only because it suited their material interests. With slavery given a new lease on life as a consequence of the cotton boom after 1795, Virginia slaveholders stood to make great profits by selling off their redundant slaves to the cotton growers. Allowing the continued importation of new slaves from Africa, so the argument goes, would only depress the domestic market in human beings. Wills does not quite come out and say so, but he acquiesces in the revisionists' reasoning. "Louisiana looked like a bonanza to people [like Jefferson] anxious to unload their slaves at high prices," he observes, "and it looked that way precisely *because* Jefferson excluded slave importations from abroad."

This is economic determinism so crude that it makes the old works of Charles Beard look like exercises in idealism. Wills's chronology is also out of sync with the evidence. Long before the cotton boom, George Mason, Jefferson, and others had denounced the overseas slave trade. In his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson sharply attacked the trade as "piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers." In 1807, Jefferson faced stern opposition from Southerners, Republicans and Federalists alike, especially in South Carolina and Georgia, where more Africans had been imported over the previous twenty years than during the entire colonial period. Yet Jefferson stuck by his long-standing principles, congratulating Congress for ending the "violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending in-

Ulysses
Vintage book reviews from the pages of The New Republic. Only at www.tnr.com/indexarts

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habitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country have long been eager to proscribe." Wills's jaundiced view makes even that speech sound squalid.

Nor, finally, does Wills understand that Jefferson's ideas formed the basis of the most impassioned political anti-slavery efforts during the opening decades of the nineteenth century. While Federalists such as Pickering railed against the two-thirds clause, Northern Jeffersonians attacked slavery and its enlargement, as well as the slave trade, on the explicitly Jeffersonian ground that all men are created equal. Numerous Federalists, including Rufus King and Elias Boudinot, also opposed slavery on principle—but from Albert Gallatin in 1798 through the Missouri crisis, it was the Northern Democratic-Republicans who usually made the most trenchant arguments. It was not some pro-slavery Jeffersonian Southern interest, artificially inflated by the three-fifths clause, that carried the House over slavery's expansion into Missouri in 1819. Instead, an outraged majority of Northern anti-slavery Republicans who opposed that expansion won the House votes—egalitarian democrats who asserted that Jefferson's Declaration was the great "national covenant," and who proclaimed that the fulfillment of Jeffersonian ideals meant the prohibition of slavery's spread and the commencement of slavery's extinction. Jefferson's principles were larger than the man himself. But those are reasons for admiring Jefferson, not abhorring him.

W

In one of his book's few praiseworthy sentences, Wills lauds "modern historians' general and growing labor to grasp the pervasiveness of slavery's effects on our early history." He expresses his hope that his book can join in that effort. But in this it fails dismally. Slavery's effects certainly were pervasive, but anyone looking for an explanation for how and why this was so will only be misinformed by Wills's errors and polemics. Wills claims that he is not a Jefferson-basher, and says that he plans to write a book in praise of Jefferson. I fear that with friends like Wills, Jefferson needs no enemies.

Wills's book is a perfect document of our cultural and political moment, in the way that Wiencek's book is not. The discrediting of the Enlightenment, the debunking of great white men, intellectual fortune-hunting—all play a part, but these causes cannot explain why Thomas Jefferson has become the greatest target in the politicized history of recent times. I understand that the more greatly admired a figure is, the more likely he or she is to come under attack; but the American pastime of scandal-mongering and idol-crushing has not extended itself as viciously to Washington or Franklin or the Roosevelts, let alone to Lincoln. Why Jefferson?

It is grotesque to see writers such as Joseph Ellis and Garry Wills go so far as to resuscitate the dead (and deservedly dead) tradition of the Federalists—including the political lunatic Timothy Pickering, about whom, as Wills shows, one or two positive things can indeed be said—in order to destroy the prestige of Jefferson and Jeffersonianism. Shall we call these historians neo-Federalists? But that makes no sense either, because Federalism has been safely dead since sometime between 1800 and 1824 (historians disagree about the details). It does not threaten our sense of the nation's virtues and, more important, of its shortcomings. If nothing that is alive can be blamed on Federalism, then it becomes all the easier to root around in it for debater's points—an anti-slavery diatribe here, a realistic rumination on original sin there, or perhaps something that looks (with enough squinting) like a precursor to modern liberal activism. Since it is dead, few will bother to point out that its defenders have erred. Since it is dead, its apologists look merely iconoclastic and erudite and clever.

But Jefferson is alive, and therefore dangerous. By his best examples and his worst, he still eats at American consciences. Among the founders of this democracy, Washington was its father and Madison was its mind, but Jefferson was its conscience. That he could not live up to his own high principles, at Monticello as well as in the President's House, is not the same as saying that he betrayed those principles, or that the principles themselves embodied some hidden evil. Failure, or hypocrisy, always attends high ideals. The imperfection of the morally ambitious is not surprising; it is only the most rudimentary information about how the moral life is actually lived.

Jefferson articulated an egalitarian standard that neither he nor the early republic matched, and that the nation is still struggling to match. He is, in other words, an abiding torment. The progenitor of American egalitarianism, he is the lasting messenger of the bad news about ourselves, the stubborn monitor of our truancies, the hard if human teacher against whom we sin, collectively and individually. His is a stringent and reproaching legacy. Who would not wish to have it complicated or qualified or (mis)interpreted out of its stringency and its reproach? I tremble for my country when I reflect that Jefferson is right.

And there is another reason that Jefferson's example is so irksome: he tried to put his high democratic principles into practice at the highest levels of politics. No *philosophe* anywhere in the Atlantic world succeeded as Jefferson did in turning the highest values of the Enlightenment into living realities. (His friend Madison, who was chiefly responsible for the Constitution, came awfully close, but he proved to be a less capable political leader than Jefferson.) Jefferson preached equality, not purity. His insistence that political philosophy be carried directly into politics meant that he had to make compromises and to protect his political viability, over slavery as over every other difficult issue. As president, beleaguered by his critics, he observed to a friend that "what is practicable must often control what is pure theory." This, in turn, meant that he would expose himself to charges of inconsistency and cunning, from posterity as well as from his contemporaries. Judged by the standard of purity demanded by many historians, Jefferson is easily traduced as a monster of manipulation and self-contradiction. Any effective political leader is similarly vulnerable—but none, not even Lincoln, set as high a level of expectation as Jefferson did. And so he comes in for sulphurous abuse.

Thomas Jefferson will survive this latest bashing, just as his democratic political ideals outlasted the Federalists and their wretched Pickering. Historians will correct the errors and the tendentious prosecutions, and will retrieve Lincoln's judgment that "the principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society." Indeed, the time to worry will come when Jefferson is no longer vexing and oppressive—when he becomes so untroubling, so safe, and so disgraced that nobody bothers to attack him anymore. When that happens, our democracy, and not just Jefferson, will have expired of its own complacency. ■

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Jenna Weissman Joselit
Tin Pan Academy

MAKING AMERICANS:
JEWS AND THE BROADWAY MUSICAL
By Andrea Most
(Harvard University Press, 253 pp., $29.95)

ON SEPTEMBER 6, 1909, Israel Zangwill's four-act play *The Melting Pot* came to town. It opened at the Comedy Theater on West Forty-first Street in the heart of Broadway, and forever changed the way Americans thought and spoke about the immigrant experience. Fresh from its success in Washington, D.C., where it had been seen and applauded by no less a fan than the president of the United States, the play told of a budding romance between a hot-blooded immigrant Jewish violinist named David Quixano and a seething and exquisitely sensitive social settlement worker named Vera Revendal, in whose veins coursed the blood of Cossacks. As it happened, Vera's father, a Russian nobleman, was responsible for a pogrom years before in which David's family had been massacred. An invincible obstacle to true love? Fat chance. In the New World nothing could stand in the way of Cupid—or of Zangwill, whose characters were given to speechifying at the drop of a hat. "A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American."

Shakespeare it ain't. And yet contemporary audiences, especially those known dismissively as the "subway public," could not get enough of "racial plays" such as *The Melting Pot* or, for that matter, its successor *Abie's Irish Rose*, which debuted on May 23, 1922. One of the longest-running productions in Broadway history—Gilbert Seldes, writing in these pages in 1927, called it the "first universally popular play of modern times"—*Abie's Irish Rose* transformed the heartbreak of intermarriage into the stuff of humor. A newly married young couple, Abe Levy and Rose Mary Murphy, try their damnedest to keep their marriage a secret from their disapproving Jewish and Irish families. Eventually they overcome a series of cultural mishaps that center, comically, on food (ham, anyone?) and festivity to demonstrate that, in the end, true love can win out over the claims of hearth and history.

Critics wrung their hands in despair at these overwrought, heavy-handed productions whose plots, it was said, "reach one of the furthest points north ... [on] the magnetic pole of melodrama." *The Melting Pot*, wrote one seasoned veteran of the stage, is nothing more than "sentimental claptrap," filled to the brim with "platitudinous Americanisms." As for *Abie's Irish Rose*, its characters, according to another critic, were painted "with a brush at least a mile wide." This is a play with all the "finesse" of a comic strip.

True, there was nothing the least bit subtle, coy, or coded about these or dozens of similar plays that once lit up Broadway. Everything was on the surface, immediately accessible: broad sighs, mighty guffaws, mangled English, heaps of sentiment. But that was the point. While critics squirmed in their seats, the men and women in the audience were thrilled to see their recognizably humdrum lives and conflicts dramatized—and happily resolved—on the American stage. Audiences came to be entertained, of course, but they left feeling heartened, welcomed, even affirmed. As one eyewitness observed, they were "warm and happy every minute they're in their seats."

Among those feeling warm and happy were immigrant Jews and their children, who, by the interwar years, took to the theater with such great avidity that they made a habit of it. At home in Broadway's plush seats, they freely transferred their allegiance from the Irving Place Theater, where Yiddish plays once held sway, to the Music Box and the St. James. History, no less than subject matter, also explains the Jews' affinity for the playhouse. In the wake of Emancipation, German Jews made a point of showing their eagerness to belong and their appreciation of *Kultur* by attending concerts and plays. By the 1880s, they constituted the majority of concert- and theatergoers in Berlin and elsewhere throughout Germany. The unintended consequence of this intense pursuit of culture was the creation of a new kind of singularity. Once distinctive only by virtue of their theology and ritual practices, German Jews of the modern era now stood apart owing to their passion for the performing arts.

American Jews did their theatergoing cousins one better. Not only did they integrate the theater into the rhythm of their daily lives, they integrated it into the rhythm of their lives as Jews, giving rise to a cultural phenomenon all its own: the synagogue-sponsored "theater party." Appealing simultaneously to the pocketbook and to the senses, to charity and to culture, the synagogue would purchase a block of tickets to a popular show that it would then sell to its members at a slightly inflated price; the difference would go toward defraying salaries and operating expenses. An effortless and even pleasant way to raise funds, the theater party inventively drew on the modern Jew's affection for the theater, rendering it a collective, and socially sanctioned, experience in the process.

The heyday of the synagogue theater party coincided with the golden age of American musical theater, with the staging of *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and *The Sound of Music*, those glorious amalgams of song and dance which, in short order, rendered the racial play a thing of the past. But it also remained a going concern well into the 1970s, especially among suburban Jewish families like my own. I can still recall how my parents, tingling with excitement, boarded a bus with their fellow congregants that would take them from Long Island, deposit them safely in the heart of the theater district, and then whisk them back home following the play and a nightcap at Sardi's, that redoubt of urban glamour. Early the next morning they would linger over all the lovely details, recounting what it was like to be transported—through song, dance, and stage wizardry—to the Wild West or the Far East. What loomed large in their telling was not the thrill of recognition so much as the thrall of the exotic. Sometimes, if we were lucky, my parents would bring home the cast album. We would repair to the den, careful not to mess with

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the newly purchased stereo set, and immediately Bali Hai would call to us and "Shall We Dance?" would have us waltzing around the room.

LITTLE DID WE SUSPECT THAT these buoyant tunes were actually expressions of deep-seated anxieties about race or that the Broadway musical was itself an exercise in cultural politics. You've got to be taught, as the song says. And this is what Andrea Most teaches in her study of several classic musical comedies produced between 1925 and 1951. From *Whoopee* to *The King and I*, "musical comedies," she writes, are "narratives of a desperate Jewish desire to resist essentialized (or racialized) identity through the powerful language of theatricality." Who knew?

Most's book, which eschews innuendo and mudslinging in favor of theory and nuanced interpretation, takes the often silly stuff of musical comedy very seriously indeed. A world away from backstage gossip, it offers readers a series of carefully considered case studies of what she takes to be the deeper, darker meaning of some of America's most beloved theatrical productions, many of them the handiwork of American Jewish composers, lyricists, and playwrights: Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, Dorothy Fields, Lorenz Hart—the list goes magnificently on. Attributing to this galaxy of talent a degree of intention and common purpose that few of its stars, I suspect, would recognize, Most argues nothing less than that the "social reality of being a Jew in America is fundamentally inscribed in the form of the American musical theater."

Conflicted, beset, troubled, and ill at ease with their Jewishness, Most's American Jewish men and women are said to have created an alternative, make-believe world of happy endings and whitewashed beginnings, a world of dancing feet and full-throated song. "The Broadway stage," she writes, "was a space where Jews envisioned an ideal America and subtly wrote themselves into that scenario." If you thought *Oklahoma!* was a story of nation-building or *South Pacific* a tale of interracial romance, think again. *Oklahoma!*, says Most, "mirrored a long-awaited Jewish dream of homecoming," while *South Pacific* is the "story of Cold War anxieties and Jewish assimilationist desires." Nothing if not insistent, her book seeks—and finds—traces of Jewishness on the dusty plains of Oklahoma, amid the luxuriant foliage of the Pacific islands, and in the court of the king of Siam.

Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera: like so many other books, *Making Americans* reflects both the academy's recent fascination with popular culture and the peculiar terms of its engagement. Long the stepchild of scholarship, the study of film, television, radio, and the performing arts has now come into its own, and with a vengeance. Books by the dozens are published annually, while a stream of symposia, conferences, and exhibitions attests to its steady hold on the academic imagination. Take, for instance, last year's show at the Jewish Museum in New York, "Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting," which was ably curated by J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler. Though not without its revelations—Betty Boop was a "role model for Jewish women"!—it focused its considerable interpretive energies on a cast of familiar Jewish characters: Al Jolson, Fanny Brice, Sid Caesar, Jerry Seinfeld, Molly Goldberg (the "*balebuste* of the airwaves"), the "celluloid princes" of Hollywood. Drawing on film stills, radio broadcasts, advertisements, movie posters, and anti-Semitic broadsides, "Entertaining America" argued, ingeniously, that in the New World, the age-old "Jewish question"—the assimilability of the Jews—was worked out within the realm of popular culture rather than in the streets or in the courts or in the legislatures. When Betty Boop boop-oop-a-dooped, or Molly Goldberg leaned her head out the window and yelled "yoo-hoo" to her neighbor, or Sid Caesar threw cold water on Imogene Coca's head, they were not entertaining America or just cutting up so much as "defining what being Jewish is for many American Jews." To reckon with these characters, concludes the exhibition, is to "map Jewish presence and Jewish continuity."

Most's book is cut from the same cloth. Much like "Entertaining America," it is less concerned with the aesthetic and expressive properties of popular culture or its impact on the audience than with its purportedly covert agenda: the stresses and the strains of being Jewish. What matters here is not what theatergoers actually took away, what tunes they hummed as they exited from the theater or what they made of Anna, Aunt Eller, Nellie, or Emile. What matters is the "encoded" subtext, or what was left unsung and unsaid. Along the way the audience tends to disappear into the maw of postmodern theory, which is not, I daresay, terribly relevant to the story at hand. Nor, it seems, is the emotional extravagance, the joy, the snappiness of American musical theater; it, too, gets lost in the problematizing shuffle. After all, how can one speak of the magic of musical theater when it is understood to be the tortured workings of the American Jewish psyche or, as Most puts it, a reflection of the "hunger for inclusion"?

Most seems very pleased with the shocking novelty of her insights, but her analysis is not nearly as new as she thinks it is. Ironically, this theoretically up-to-the-minute book, like so much else about the study of popular culture these days, is really a throwback to an earlier time, in which references to ethnicity, race, and religion were casually tossed about both on stage and off; a time when critics did not mince words and playwrights did not traffic in sly, coded allusions that flew way above the heads of most audience members. Consider Alexander Woollcott's biography of Irving Berlin, *The Story of Irving Berlin*, published in 1925. Despite his sympathetic, even worshipful account of the songwriter's remarkable career, Woollcott could not resist the temptation to attribute virtually everything that Berlin ever created to his Jewish background. And I mean everything: Berlin's use of syncopation, his spare yet incisive lyrics, and even his penchant for the key of F-sharp are invariably linked to the "wailing" this and the "sorrowful" that of Jewish history. It is awfully hard, of course, to square "Blue Skies" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band," the song that "set the shoulders of America a-swaying," with the weight of the Jewish past, but Woollcott would have it no other way: "It is in [Berlin's] blood to write the lugubrious melodies which, in the jargon of Tin Pan Alley, have a tear in them. Back of him are generations of wailing cantors to tinge all his work with an enjoyable melancholy.... No lady is to blame. It is his grandfather."

Acceptable in 1925, such remarks about blood (and wailing cantors) now jar the ear. Surely, we now think to ourselves, the estimable Woollcott ought to have known better. We prefer to reduce people to their roots more politely, by speaking of identity, or, in Andrea Most's case, of anxieties about inclusion. Isn't there someone, somewhere, who believes that a great song is finally more a marvel than a manifesto? ■

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MOSCOW DIARIST

Demolished

TWO ISSUES FORCED ME TO take a break from a fellowship program in the United States and go back to Russia last week. I needed to try to save my apartment building from the mayor of Moscow, who plans to raze it and give the land to his wife's redevelopment company. And I also wanted to vote in the March 14 presidential election—the way Russia is going, under Vladimir Putin, I thought it might be my last chance.

IT SO HAPPENS THAT I HAVE NEVER voted in a Russian presidential election: I spent them all in Chechnya, reporting on the farce that passed for voting there. I would watch people sign the rolls for themselves, their neighbors, and their children, all of whom might be dead or living in exile, and be handed stacks of ballots with which to vote. The reported turnout in Chechnya invariably exceeded the number of people living there—and, just as they were supposed to, those who "showed up" always voted for the incumbent.

NOW IT SEEMED THE WHOLE COUNTRY was becoming like Chechnya. Putin had squashed any real opposition, and his only worry was that voter turnout might be less than 50 percent, in which case the vote would be considered invalid—and, by law, Putin would not be able to run in the special election that would follow. Word among politicos was that the Kremlin had told local electoral commissions to aim for a 70 percent turnout, with 70 percent of it going to Putin—that way the president would avoid winning by an embarrassingly high, Soviet-style margin but still capture 50 percent of the eligible vote.

FOR THE DEMOCRATICALLY MINDED, there were three options: boycott the vote and hope turnout wouldn't reach 50 percent, vote against all the candidates (an option on the Russian ballot), or vote for Irina Khakamada, a former member of parliament running on a strictly anti-Putin platform. Oddly, the boycotters' logic was the most optimistic: They argued that shunning the vote now would somehow help bring about a more free and fair election in 2008. Khakamada's approach was to admit that we were back in the USSR and to try to use the system against itself, as the old-style dissidents did. She ran because, as a registered candidate, the law entitled her to live time on Russian state television—which she got, after a fight.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE ELECTION, I stayed up until 3 a.m. talking the decision over with five friends. On participation, our group split. Some argued that we should take no part in the falsification of a democratic process. I argued that we should use the right to vote until it was taken away. But we agreed that, if we voted, our vote would not mean that we wanted to see a particular candidate become president. Since the result of the election was preordained, the meaning of a vote was open to interpretation. By this logic, any of us could vote for any of the candidates as a comment on Russian politics. A vote for Putin, for example, was an acknowledgment that the public was ultimately responsible for the country's fate. A vote for the Communist candidate or for the obscure man nominated by Vladimir Zhirinovsky's so-called Liberal Democratic Party would hint, respectively, at the Soviet or the Kafkaesque nature of the election.

WE MOVED ON TO OTHER TOPICS. ONE of my friends, a TV journalist, said her pilot had been well-received by producers, all of whom said they couldn't make a decision on the show until after the election, when TV executives would be shuffled by the Kremlin. Another friend, an investment professional, complained that her work had been stalled for two weeks, since Putin fired the government: The agency regulating her field had been abolished. A third friend told of a company that has been using the recently enacted land code to buy large amounts of property on the outskirts of Moscow for pennies. He suggested one of us could help him help the company strike some resale deals—and everyone would make a lot of money. I hadn't heard talk like this since the mid-'90s, when contradictory laws allowed businessmen to get rich quick. Nevertheless, the Russian and Western media credit Putin with restoring law and order.

IT'S THE UTTER LACK OF LAW AND order that will probably allow Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov to tear down the building where my family lives (as compensation, we stand to get an apartment in a much cheaper section of town). Such demolitions are blatantly illegal but increasingly common. Recently, Luzhkov has razed a number of historic monuments, including the famous Stalin-era Moskva Hotel, and Moscow has been buzzing about his plan to knock down a nineteenth-century exhibition hall just a few yards from the Kremlin and replace it with a parking garage.

ON ELECTION DAY, BEFORE I LEFT MY apartment, I watched the get-out-the-vote effort from my window: A group of people sharing a few Sunday morning beers on a bench in the courtyard were unceremoniously escorted to the polls by two burly undercover cops. I went to cast my vote for Khakamada. The polling place near my house turned out to share quarters with United Russia, the pro-Putin party that dominates parliament. Just outside the building, a moveable newsstand prominently displayed a magazine whose cover featured one of the opposition candidates with a Hitler-type mustache drawn on.

LATE IN THE EVENING, I FOUND MYSELF at Khakamada's defeat party. There were few people but plenty of cheap wine, lots of good food, and even something to celebrate—returns showed the candidate having garnered a respectable 4 percent. Just after 1 a.m., Putin walked across Red Square from the Kremlin to his campaign headquarters and declared victory—he had received 71 percent of the vote, with 64 percent of the electorate turning out. He promised to continue building democracy, and then he walked back to the Kremlin, through clouds of smoke. Just outside Red Square, the old exhibition hall being eyed by Luzhkov for destruction was ablaze. Coincidence? I doubt it. After all, no one can protest to save a building that's already gone.

MASHA GESSEN

Masha Gessen is a Nieman fellow at Harvard.

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The Department of Justice announced a few weeks ago that Oracle's takeover of PeopleSoft violates antitrust law, stating that "we believe this transaction is anti-competitive—pure and simple." Ironically, in the same week the Supreme Court, in *United States Postal Service v. Flamingo Industries,* decided that the massive United States Postal Service is exempt from all antitrust laws. Yet **anticompetitive behavior by the Postal Service is more harmful to consumers, competitors, and the overall economy than most private sector mergers**.

The Postal Service enjoys a government-enforced monopoly over the delivery of all letters. Yet it competes in a wide and increasing array of businesses in which private firms are already active, including package and express delivery; it has recently ventured into selling a variety of retail merchandise and e-commerce services (most of which are unrelated to postal services).

A major concern is that the Postal Service will use funds from monopolized delivery services, where it holds customers captive, to underprice in businesses where it faces competition. Given that the final authority to set rates rests not with its regulator, the Postal Rate Commission, but with the Postal Service itself, that fear is justified. Moreover, the best available estimates (given the Postal Service's poor accounting data) indicate that it has earned losses on many products where it faces competition. Underpricing is thus nearly a certainty.

Various other concerns have arisen about the Postal Service's competitive activities. In addition to monopoly power, it is exempt from all taxation. It can borrow from the Treasury at government-guaranteed rates. It has the power of eminent domain and is excused from SEC disclosure requirements. It is not required to pay parking tickets or registration fees on its vehicles. It is immune from antitrust laws and is not subject to Federal Trade Commission truth-in-advertising regulations, meaning that it can assert anything it wishes in ads.

All those valuable government-bestowed privileges allow the Postal Service to inefficiently and unfairly compete with private firms. **The Postal Service is able to force private firms out of business by virtue of its special privileges**, rather than through superior management acumen, better labor relations, or indeed any business-related skills. It can offer any competitive service it wishes at any time at any price without any regulatory oversight whatsoever.

This is bad policy. Consumers will be hurt because the costs of those ventures will be passed on to them through higher rates in monopolized activities and because they will face less choice after the Postal Service has forced competitors out of business. Competitors will go out of business, shrink, or not start up in the first place in the face of unfair competition from the Postal Service. Finally, state and local governments will lose tax revenue when the Postal Service forces out taxpaying businesses.

The executive and legislative branches should act. The Postal Service ought to be kept out of competitive activities entirely. Better still, it should be relieved of all government-granted privileges, including monopoly power. This situation is anticompetitive, pure and simple, and it should be changed.

—Rick Geddes

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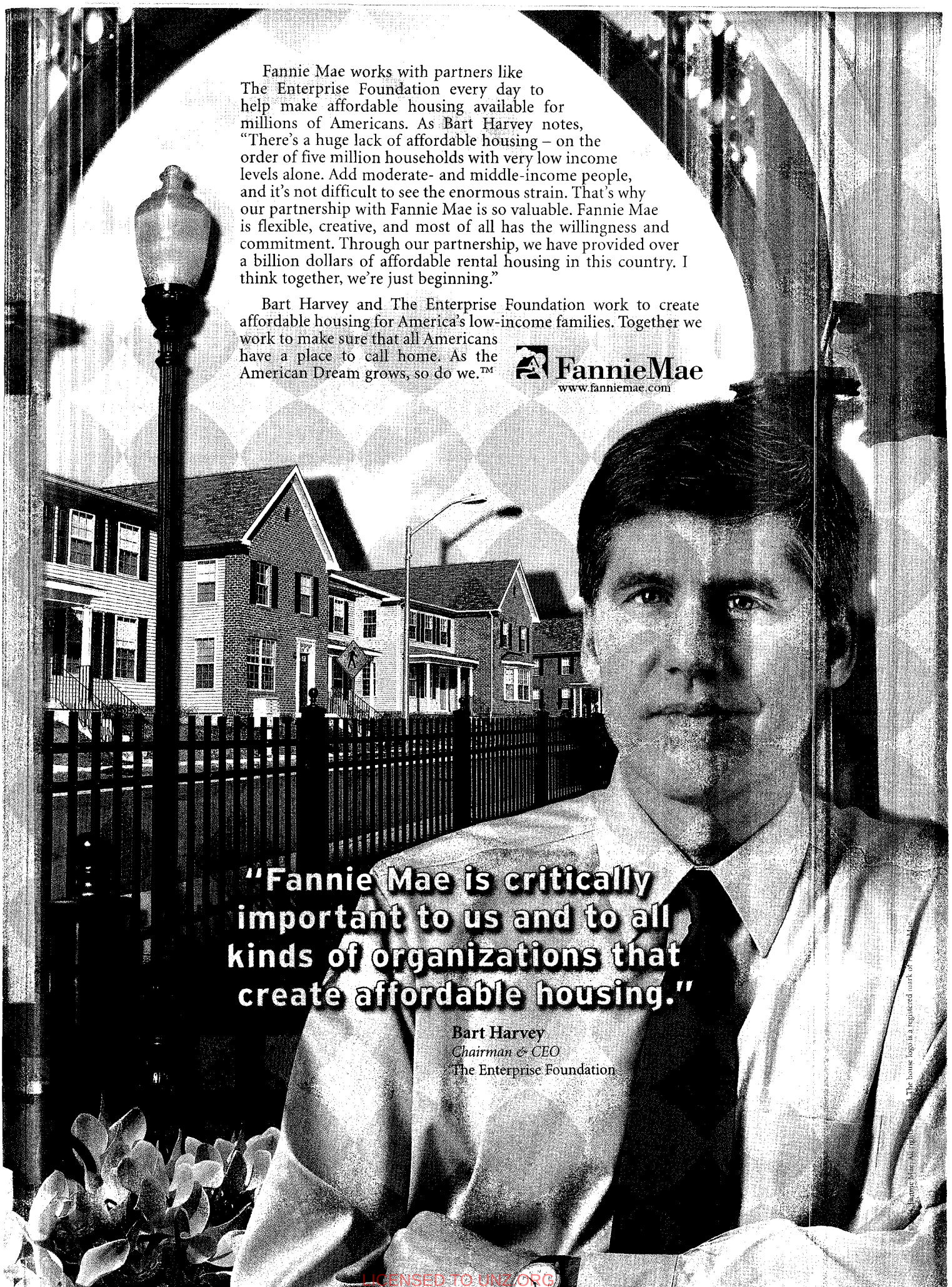
Fannie Mae works with partners like The Enterprise Foundation every day to help make affordable housing available for millions of Americans. As Bart Harvey notes, "There's a huge lack of affordable housing – on the order of five million households with very low income levels alone. Add moderate- and middle-income people, and it's not difficult to see the enormous strain. That's why our partnership with Fannie Mae is so valuable. Fannie Mae is flexible, creative, and most of all has the willingness and commitment. Through our partnership, we have provided over a billion dollars of affordable rental housing in this country. I think together, we're just beginning."
Bart Harvey and The Enterprise Foundation work to create affordable housing for America's low-income families. Together we work to make sure that all Americans have a place to call home. As the American Dream grows, so do we.™
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